





Founded by  
RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE



# THE VISVABHARATI QUARTERLY

VOL. X, ( 1944-45 New Series )





# THE VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY

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अरिष्ट



# A POET'S TESTAMENT\*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

It is not easy to know one's own true self. The single thread that unifies the various experiences of life eludes discovery. If Providence had not blessed me with a long span of life and had denied me the opportunity of reaching the ripe old age of seventy, then I would never have got the chance of forming a clear picture of my own self. I have looked upon a self split up in diverse ways ; I have engaged myself in various activities, with the result that the essential 'I' is scattered into fragments. After traversing this long circular road of my life, now when the time of leave-taking draws near I am able to survey the entire orbit. And I can now realize that I have but one introduction to the world—which is that I am a poet and nothing else. My personality as revealed from time to time to various persons through the media of diverse activities, does not express myself as a whole. I am neither a philosopher nor am I deeply versed in scriptures ; I am neither a preceptor nor a leader of men.

There was a time when I said, 'I don't want to be the leader of new Bengal in the new era.' That was very true. Those who come as messengers and prophets of the Immaculate One, who cleanse the world of its sins and inspire men to perform good and blameless deeds—they are worthy of my veneration. But my seat is not by them. But when that one white radiance becomes many, when it shoots out into a multi-coloured coruscation and irradiates the world, then I become the herald of the multiform. We artists and poets are messengers of the *abih* or light which is intoxicated with this spontaneous joy of universal creation. We dance and make others dance, we laugh and make others laugh, we paint, we sing. To realize the play of this Diverse One in the depths of my heart and to give it outward expression—that is my task. I lay no claim to lead men to their destination, my part is to walk with the wayfarer. We are here to add our supply of joy to the wayside pleasures, to the cool shade, to the wealth of the greenery, to the beauty of flowers and foliage

\* Originally delivered as a speech in Bengali at Santiniketan on the occasion of the author's seventieth birthday, 8 May 1981. Translated into English by Kshitit Roy.



and to the song of the birds. I have taken upon myself the task of distributing the diverse delights of the One who disports himself as many, here, there and everywhere, in melody, songs, dances, pictures, forms and colours, in the clash of joy and sorrow and in the conflict of good and evil. I have been charged with the duty of decorating the various allegories of His playroom—this is my one and only introduction. I have been described by other adjectives as well ; some have called me a mystic sage, others have given me the post of a schoolmaster. But from early childhood I have given my schoolmaster the slip for the sake of playing ; so tuition is not my function either.

I remember the days when as a boy I started on life's journey with a flute of many stops in my hand. Something distinct strove to reveal itself from amidst the haziness of that dawn. It was the first happy meeting of light with darkness, and for the first time the flood of words borne on the morning breached through the flood-gates of my heart and awoke a ripple in the still waters. Whether I could understand it clearly or not, whether I could interpret it well or ill, this much was sure that it was this first impact that released the flood of my own words. The play of the Diverse One has stirred the heart of the universe with many melodies, the waves of which rocked my childish heart to a restlessness that still remains. I have completed seventy years of life but even now my friends complain of this trait of frivolity which interferes with the gravity becoming to old age. But they do not realize that there is no limit to the demands made on a poet by the All-maker. He himself is restless as the southern breeze which blows through the woods at springtime. I cannot waste my days, hedged round with seriousness. During the last seventy years I have made experimental sallies until at last there is no doubt left in my mind as to my being the playmate of the Restless One. I have no idea what I have achieved or what will survive after me. I shall not yearn after lasting results. The presiding deity of my life plays, but cares for nothing ; the playroom he builds today with his own hands, he pulls down himself tomorrow. The *alpona*, with which this grove of mango trees was decorated yesterday, was all washed away by the restless storm of last night, and our artists had to do it all anew.

If I have been able to supply a few toys to the playroom of the great god of time, I do not expect them to be preserved for all time to come. Broken toys will be thrown into the dust-heap. It will be enough for me if during the tenure of my life I succeeded in filling an earthen cup with the drink of delight. The next day the drink will be finished and the cup will be broken to bits, but the feast will not have been in vain. On the occasion of the completion of my seventieth year, in the name of the god of joy, let me remind everybody that the flavour of the game is spoilt by the fruitless efforts to adjudge my superiority or inferiority. We must forget the wrangling of critics with their measuring rods. I have no desire to scramble for the popular prizes of cheap reputation which lie scattered in the dust. May I never be so lacking in sense as to cry myself hoarse over the wages of my labour.

In this asrama too, only its *expressive* activities are to be traced to me. The organization of the asrama is in the hands of the organizers. I wanted to give shape to man's innate desire of self-expression. That is why I sought a sequestered place, a *tapovana*, to form a suitable setting. My ambition was to become the playmate of the budding children, not amidst the brick and mortar of cities, but under the canopy of the blue sky, in these unconfined spaces open to sunrise and sunset. My duty is to help in expressing the beneficent and beautiful form of life which has evolved in this small community of hearts in the asrama. Not that I have refrained from initiating other activities here, but my real place is there where it has taken a form and a shape. I am to be found in the dumb anguish of the villages yearning for expression. That I have started classes for the education of children is of secondary importance. My endeavour has been to remove that which hampers the early expression of their tender life, their dawning desire to learn, the newly-sprouted seedlings of their efforts. Otherwise I should have lost myself in a wilderness of rules, regulations and syllabus. These are necessary but they are not of first importance. My friends are there to look after them.

My joy and fulfilment lie in trying to make these children dance and sing to the rhythmic play of the god who is full of play and to rouse the spirit of delight in their hearts by giving them occasional holidays. I am afraid I cannot afford to be more serious. Those who

want to place me on a high pedestal, with the ringing of bells and the sounding of conchshells, to them I would say that I have been born in a lower rung ; the master of games has given me leave to withdraw from the seats of the wise and mighty. I have poured out my heart into the dust of the earth. I am the friend of all who are near to the lap of the earth, who live and have their being on the soil, who take their first steps on the earth and find their final rest in her bosom. I am a poet and nothing else.

## C. F. RAMUZ

By PIERRE KOHLER

THE fame of C. F. Ramuz has long since passed beyond the frontiers of his own little country. It may be that he is better appreciated in certain far-off places where some of his books are read in translation than in the village near Lausanne where he lives in retirement, avoiding as far as possible any occasion of showing himself in public. On September 24 , 1943, a Lausanne paper announced that Ramuz was sixty-five, and went on to say that his name was for ever associated with the sense of greatness. However true that may be, we can imagine Ramuz' disillusioned smile if his eyes chanced to fall on it. For he cannot have forgotten how long his own people neither understood nor liked his work.

No writer seems less anxious to win popularity ; none is less fitted to flatter the public or to court it with facile attractions. Yet Ramuz had to earn his living by his pen. In the early part of his career he published a large number of articles in the French-Swiss press simply to earn the modest livelihood he could not count on from his novels, which were published in small editions of 1000 to 1500 copies. But even this business of earning his daily bread he carried on with pride, with a slightly haughty detachment, marking the little sketches, the reflections on daily life with the imprint of his rare spirit and original style. To reach the poet, readers always had to go much more than half-way along the long road which naturally separates an

artist, an aristocrat of the spirit, from men absorbed in the scramble for material existence.

While Ramuz as a man is not easy to approach, and is really known only by a small circle of friends, that does not imply that his work is inaccessible. On the contrary, what happens with Ramuz' work is common to all works of great creative art which repel at first sight by the strangeness of their form. Readers retreat, wondering whether the author of these unaccountable productions is not laughing at them. Then they grow accustomed to him. Gradually they realize that the formal peculiarities are not the essence of the work, that they are not ends but only means to an end. Learning a language which might well be a foreign tongue, they admit that the writer must have made use of it in order to communicate an unprecedented message. And soon the good news is welcomed, and they accept with gratitude the artistic delight held in store for them by a writer who has the gift of creating beauty. Certain books by C. F. Ramuz remain difficult and will only be enjoyed by those for whom perfect art exists only at the spearhead of modernism. But not all are fenced off by barbed wire entanglements. Contemporary taste has developed rapidly, and the young people of our day find the same pleasure in reading Ramuz as their parents did in reading the novels of the early years of the century. From now on they have their place in that storehouse of classics which have been proved and found to be good and are secure against oblivion.

The majority of C. F. Ramuz' novels deal with peasant life. It was often thought that their author must be a peasant who had learnt to write, and readers seemed to see in the slow and ponderous movement of his style the difficulty which a man accustomed to the plough-handle and the pitchfork feels when it comes to wielding an instrument so light and delicate as the pen. The assumption was totally mistaken. Ramuz is the son of a Lausanne tradesman. He was born at Lausanne in 1878 and graduated in classics at Lausanne University. Then, under pretext of writing a thesis, he went to Paris where he later settled for several years. Actually he had resolved to become not a scholar, not a historian, but a poet. He had early heard the imperious call of his vocation. But as a boy he was timid by nature and a good son, and the somewhat narrow traditions of his

class made it impossible for him to dedicate himself to poetry. The memoirs of his youth and the fragments of his *Journal* recently published in the *Oeuvres Complètes* give some hint of the struggles it cost him, shy, easily discouraged and pessimist as he was to force his way, by his own indomitable will, into the one career adequate to his gifts.

He tells how he arrived in Paris with a poem describing a little village in the canton de Vaud. This poem was written in classical alexandrines and, as he says, "after the fashion of Paris". It was in Paris that he discovered that the form was obsolete. Infected with the literary fashions of 1900, the novice pulled his fine poem to pieces and rewrote it in *vers libre*. When, on his return to Lausanne, he shyly presented his MS. to an old publisher whom he had known as a boy, the worthy man thought he had written the poem in *vers libre* because he was too inexperienced to write it in regular verse. And that is why *Le Petit Village* was not published at Lausanne, but at Geneva, in 1903.

Soon, however, the purely lyrical evocation of his native country ceased to satisfy him. He set to work on a story. His first novel, *Aline*, which appeared in 1905, received a very encouraging welcome from the critics. For if the public was slow to be won by Ramuz, he was acclaimed by writers who at once realized the originality of his talent. *Aline* is a poor little country girl who is seduced by a young man, the cock of the village walk, who is too rich to contemplate marriage with a portionless girl. She has a child; the child dies. To escape her shame she hangs herself. A simple story—trite in its brutality. But while the subject might have issued from the school of Zola, the story is quite different in tone, in bearing. We can already distinguish, if only in germ, that peculiar poetry, at once primitive and subtle, which distinguishes Ramuz from all the other writers of rustic life. And if we find a similar tone in certain French regional novelists, such as Jean Giono and Henri Pourrat, it is because they have learned from the French-Swiss writer.

The canton de Vaud, the biggest of the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland, lies stretched between the Jura and the Alps, between Lake Geneva in the south and the Lake of Neuchatel in the north. Lake Geneva is fed by the Rhone, which takes its rise up

in the high glaciers of the Valais, a long valley dominated by the highest peaks in the Swiss Alps. The canton de Valais has remained Catholic, while Vaud went over to Reform in the sixteenth century. The Rhone is the living bond which unites those small regions, divided by history and the development of manners, and again links them up with the south of France and the Mediterranean. Ramuz has published several versions (nearly all his books have been revised and republished) of a magnificent prose poem, *Le Chant des pays du Rhone*. Shortly after his first appearance in the world of letters, he stayed several times in the Valais as the guest of an artist friend. The discovery of that little world, which had remained faithful to its old customs, whose life was set in the rhythm of the Alpine seasons and passed in the storms of primitive passions, was a great delight to him. This was the village from which Ramuz derived the material for a number of his novels, from *Jean-Luc Persécuté* (1909), which may be regarded as his first masterpiece, to *Si le soleil ne revenait pas* (1937). This little world, picturesque and superstitious, lends itself equally well to realistic description and to flights of the imagination. When in *Le Règne de l'Esprit malin*, Ramuz, inspired perhaps by a legend, showed the devil making himself master of a commune which he rouses to rebellion against God, the setting is a village in the Alps of the Valais. And when he turned to depicting a paradise where the dead live again with their earthly bodies, their earthly habits and their earthly clothes, it was in the likeness of a village of the Valais that he created *Terre du Ciel* (1925). The high valleys are sometimes shaken by falls of rock and ice, impoverished by cattle disease, darkened by winter mists to such a point that, if winter is longer and cloudier than usual, the weaker spirits may well wonder if the sun will ever come back. Ramuz, whose imagination is sombre, has made use of all these subjects. He loves to take a natural catastrophe, a collective terror as the thread of a poetical novel. The atmosphere of the Alps of the Valais is one well suited to these elemental and violent dramas. But Ramuz has chosen for the setting of similar dramas the vineyards of Vaud sloping down to Lake Geneva, or the fields of his native canton, where the people are more civilized, less primitive. A powerful poet, he imposes his vision on reality, subjects his country to the necessities of his imagination. *La Guérison des*

*maladies* ( 1917 ), the story of the diseased child of a drunkard who has the power to cure the ills of others by taking them upon herself, takes place in a little market-town in the vineyards on the shores of the Lake. *Les Signes parmi nous* ( 1919 ) goes back to the social troubles and the great epidemic through which the author's country passed at the end of the first world war. *Présence de la Mort* ( 1922 ) also takes its subject from a cataclysm, but this time it is an imaginary one : the sun comes too near the earth and the growing heat threatens the life of our world ; this vast drama is staged in a peaceful setting of town and country recognizable as Lausanne and its neighbourhood.

These are tales of dark years. After the war of 1914-1918 our author seems to have passed through a crisis, both spiritual and artistic. It was at that time that he wrote his most pessimistic books, his visions of catastrophe. It was at that time too that his literary manner was exaggerated, even exasperated. His novels lost their regular progression, the organic composition of which he had given a fine example in *Samuel Belet*, a novel constructed after the fashion of the French realists and one which is even today a favourite with many readers. In the dark years he pushed his experiments in rustic and primitive style to the point where it threatened to founder in mere childish babbling.

But an artist of his calibre could not lose his way in an impasse of the kind. Soon the sun re-emerged from behind the clouds. Ramuz' novels regained their coherence. And without abandoning certain methods by which he aimed at rendering the voice of the people, the speech of men still one with nature, the writer returned to a more intelligible form which, preserving its savour of originality, has less recourse to eccentricity. *Farinet ou la fausse monnaie* ( 1932 ), a novel founded on an actual story of a coiner who lived in the Valais, *Derborence* ( 1934 ), also founded on historical fact, a landslide which buried a number of chalets on an Alpine pasture, one of the herdsmen escaping alive, are the best examples of this happier manner.

It is not his last manner, for Ramuz is always striving for renewal. At the beginning of the present war he decided to issue a collected edition of his works, the *Oeuvres Complètes*, which was published in twenty volumes ( 1940-1941 ) by his friend H. L.

Mermod, an industrialist who turned publisher out of admiration and friendship for Ramuz. This impressive collection is, however, incomplete, not only because its author subjected his work to a rigorous selection, eliminating works he no longer liked, but also because he has continued to write since. Thus at Christmas 1942 he published a historical novel, *La Guerre aux Papiers*, founded on an episode of the revolution in the canton of Vaud; in 1802 the Vaudois peasants invaded the local chateaux and burnt the records on which the feudal rights and tithes of the owners were based. Ramuz had once before taken a historical subject from the revolution which liberated the canton of Vaud from Bernese overlordship in 1798. But this later work is different in tone. The writer has abandoned the dramatic feeling which was a distinguishing feature of most of his work. Here there are no star-crossed lovers, no idylls tragically cut short by separation. The "war of the papers" is comic warfare. The characters are handled with humour, with a touch of ridicule. This is a new manner, less tense, easier. Perhaps a man must reach the age of sixty-five to be really young.

In this last novel Ramuz uses a few dialect words preserved in the French of the canton de Vaud. Up to the present he never had recourse to that kind of picturesqueness, having a horror, as he has repeatedly declared, of anything in the nature of local colour or folklore. Hence his style is, for the most part, pure French. It is not by his vocabulary but by his syntax, by the form of his sentences, that Ramuz has endeavoured to render the slow, ponderous speech of the Vaudois peasant and given to his prose the movement which imitates the local intonation. For so cultivated a mind as Ramuz', to tamper with French syntax was an act of daring. As a young writer, he said in the preface to *Le Petit Village* that he was "seeking a form that will be uncouth, a little rough and hesitating, like the people he was trying to depict." Later he noted: "My style must be like my characters." And it is. The theoretical works of Ramuz contain revealing remarks on the art of writing. In his notes we can follow the unceasing efforts by which he achieved mastery. He says that he never imitated, that since he was twenty-three he never had a model. "My ideas come from my eyes. Such masters as I had were artists." And the art of Ramuz is certainly akin to the art of painting. He



says that style is more quickly acquired in description than in narrative, and his novels are largely made up of landscapes observed with precision but transfigured by his originality. Ramuz is the greatest word-painter of Lake Geneva and the surrounding countryside. In the biographical novel describing his education and his beginnings as writer, he disguises himself as an artist ( *Aimé Pache, peintre vaudois*, 1911, recently republished in Paris ).

He observes the natural scene in detail but, like Cézanne, whom he holds in profound respect, he reproduced reality by stripping it of its singularity. His bent is to the general. The rustic characters in his novels are simple men, moved by elementary feelings. They are silhouettes rather than characters, yet cut with such precision that they take on the significance of broadly human types. In 1908 Ramuz noted : "The love of the true is not the love of the precise. Racine is true. . . . Reconcile the love of the general with the love of the real." Nothing could be more different from a tragedy by Racine than a novel by Ramuz, yet Ramuz is aware of a profound kinship with Racine, and he set it forth in a speech held on the occasion of the award of a literary prize at Lausanne in 1936. The peasants he depicts resemble Racine's kings who are only kings because they are above social conventions and hence can yield freely to their passions as men. They are characters which are not enclosed in bourgeois society and stand outside of time.

Ramuz' pictures of his country are like woodcuts, carved out of the hard, black wood of the beam of an old wine-press. He has created a style. We can hardly say that his style, which is very personal, expresses him entirely, for there is at times in his poetical work a hint of a man greater than his work. In his essays ( *Taille de l'Homme*, *Questions*, *Besoin de Grandeur*, 1933-1937 ) we certainly become aware of a thinker questing for truth, confronting fate with the questions which life on earth can never finally answer. The noble discontent to which he confesses in his reflections is not vain ; it enriches his imaginative work, and confers on his vision of the world a greater power of penetration.

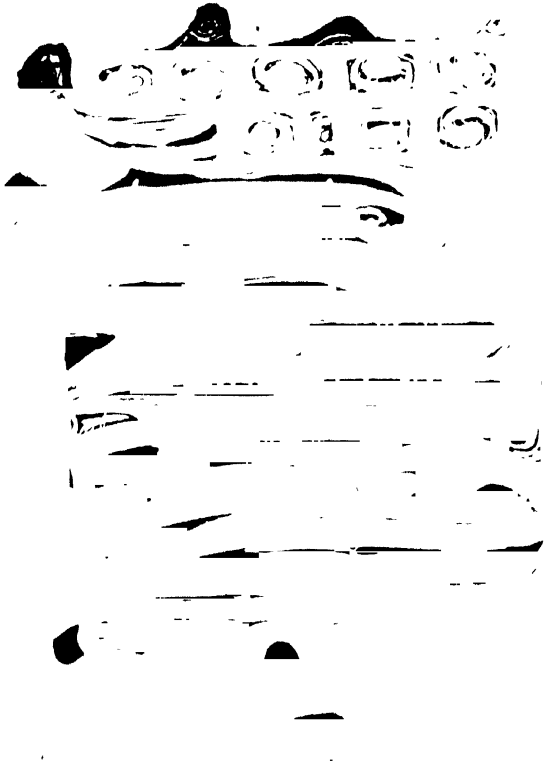
# THE ART OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

By MANINDRA BHUSHAN GUPTA

RABINDRANATH is the symbol of our age. His creations covering all spheres of life stand for Indian culture. People understand his poetry, music, short story, novel or the various dramatic productions, but when they come to his paintings, they meet with a rude shock. For the author of *Mānasi*, *Sonār tarī*, *Balākā* to draw such pictures seems heretical. They cannot understand "the meaning of his art" and vainly search for some hidden purpose in his paintings. Without betraying ignorance by any show of surprise they would challenge an artist or art critic : "Well, what do you think of Tagore's paintings? Do you put them in the category of art? Whatever do they mean?" Others would discover a high note of Indian spiritualism and mysticism in the art of Tagore just as they discover it in his poetry. European admirers of the poet often belong to this class. The people of our country are mostly sceptical. They will say, "Well, we have to admire Tagore's art because it is Tagore's. If anybody else draws such pictures, they would never fall within the category of art."

It is strange that the artist Tagore is different from the poet Tagore. Though his poetry and art are the creations of the same person, they run in different channels ; there is hardly any point of coincidence. Tagore as a poet has inspired the neo-Bengal school of art. The fact that he encouraged Abanindranath at the beginning of his artistic career is well known. The poet is intimately connected with Abanindranath and many of his direct disciples, but there is no trace of any "neo-Bengal" influence in his own paintings. His work stands at equal distance from the classical as well as the neo-romantic modern school. On many occasions he has expressed to the writer his dislike of the modern inclination to imitate the Ajanta or other styles, of the past or the present.

The quality of Tagore's art can be best explained by calling it "eruptive". This remark on the art of Tagore was made to me once by Abanindranath. It is that quality of art which bursts forth from sheer power of creation without any other motive or purpose. As the molten lava of a volcano makes its path by breaking all the barriers of nature, even so the art of eruptive quality breaks down all



spring hesitates <sup>at</sup> winter's door  
 but the flower ~~rashly~~ rashly ~~surrounds~~  
 to him before her time  
 and meets her doom.

Specimens of "erasures" photographed from the poet's manuscripts.

the barriers of conventional niceties and technicalities. Such art can never be produced simply by following in the footsteps of other masters of the past, nor does it attract a new train of followers. An artist of the eruptive type has to travel on the untrodden path and create a new realm of his own.

To a person who does not know the origin and development of the art of Tagore, his paintings and drawings may seem like a page of Greek. But it will not be so to one who is conversant with the grammar of his art. Grammar of the art of Tagore? Yes, Tagore's art has a grammar of its own. It is quite different from the current grammar of art.

A knowledge about the origin of his art will throw a good deal of light on the so-called "mystery" of his works. Tagore's art has its source in child's play and calligraphy. The Poet's beautiful handwriting is known to all *littérateurs*. The beautiful carving lines of his calligraphy caught the fancy of many people and have been imitated by them. The origin of Tagore's sketches and paintings is to be found in the inspiration of calligraphy. His own manuscripts show how Tagore as calligraphist gradually developed into a painter.

Whenever Tagore wanted to strike off any portion in his manuscripts, he did not simply put a line through. He was in the habit of forming the portions struck off into an imaginary design. It might be a bird or an animal of phantasy. He did this not so much from an artistic urge as in the playful mood of a child, who now and then peeped out of the mind of the poet-philosopher. When he was doing all these phantastic drawings in his leisure hours, he never thought that he would one day be classified as a painter. This was the first stage of his apprenticeship in painting.

In the second stage, the poet became an illuminator. He illuminated his own poems with his pearl-like handwriting and embellished it with human figures in decorative manner. It was not at all like an old Indian illumination rich in the combination of various colours. It was rather Gothic in style. In the first and second stage, the poet worked in black and white only. In the first stage he worked with an ordinary fountain pen and writing ink. In the second stage he used Indian ink, i.e. drawing ink. In the third stage the poet drew human figures, masks, landscapes, flowers, etc. in colours.

He is no longer a mere calligraphist but a conscious painter. When he first started to draw those grotesque designs of animals and birds, he had no consciousness of an artist, but now he consciously tried to draw a picture, to depict life and nature in pen and brush, though often in abstract form. To the poet, art was an experiment in line and colour. The technique of his work was quite original. The poet used both ends of a pen while drawing a picture. Lines were drawn with the nib, and the space filled up with colours with the handle of the pen dipped into bottles of coloured ink. Sometimes he used his fingers to lay on the colours. The texture of a picture with colours mingled together gives the effect of a rich oriental carpet.

Many new words have been introduced in the nomenclature of modern art. I want to use one of them : CONSTRUCTIONISM. Tagore's art, it can be said, is based on the principle of constructionism. In a picture of Tagore the line is significant. One line follows another or takes a direction, not to represent a reality, but to satisfy an urge of rhythm and balance. Though Tagore's design is mostly arabesque, there are occasions when he has consciously tried to be realistic, and his paintings have then become representational.

An exhibition of his paintings was held at the Birmingham City Art Gallery in England. The well-known art critic Mr. Kaynes Smith wrote in the *Birmingham Mail* :

"The first exhibit of all, a page of manuscript in which the erasures are linked together into a harmonious whole, gives the clue to the form taken by the original impulse which brought all drawings into being, and their author has himself pointed out that there is in them no primary intention of representation, but they are rather an almost automatic submission to a rhythmical impulse.

"That this rhythmical impulse should almost immediately link itself up with visual experiences in the material world is a perfectly natural thing, but if we compare the second exhibit with some others of the 1928 drawings which definitely suggest human figures in movement, we see how very sure and natural is the step from the one—a design entirely devoid of material representation, to the others in which reminiscence of natural forms is strongly marked. There is no essential difference between the two, for in both rhythm is the commanding feature."

Tagore is original and individualistic, though here and there one may find that he is Gauguinesque or Van-Goghesque. He never did anything to identify his work with the ultra-modern "isms" of Europe. His paintings were the result of a spontaneous response to his creative impulse. Once the writer of this article told the poet that his work was ultra-modern. He was very much pleased at this remark because the parallelism, if any, was unintended and was unknown to him. When his work was exhibited in Europe in 1930, the art connoisseurs of Europe, mostly of Germany, were surprised to note that Tagore produced an art for which they were striving. He had had no schooling or any serious training in art before he drew those pictures; he had never been initiated into the mysteries of anatomy, perspective, etc. which are supposed to be the monopoly of academic institutions. It was the creative impulse within the poet that made him express his mind in line and colour. When the poet suddenly appeared with his pictures, the modernist painters of Europe, who were seeking for a new path, discovered an inner kinship with his paintings. Some of his paintings done with dots and lines resemble the work of Van Gogh. Some figure compositions may resemble the work of exotic Gauguin. Some figures and portraits done with small bits of straight lines may remind one of Cubism.

The work of Pablo Picasso, who is the originator of Cubism, is referred to as intellectual pastime by Frank Rutter, the well-known English art critic. A similar remark may also be made about the art of Tagore. An art critic says that the art of Picasso has the expression of the poetry of mathematics. About Tagore's decorative motif may I be permitted to say that it has the poetry of geometry? In the process of drawing, his mind is more active than his heart. That is why many of his pictures are of the intellectual type.

If any trace of "isms" is to be found in the art of the poet, it is expressionism, which is dominant in his work. In this respect a close affinity may be found between his art and that of Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Emil Nolde. While looking through the reviews of Tagore's exhibition in Europe in 1930, I found the name of Nolde mentioned more than once. If one is acquainted with the modern school of Europe, particularly with the expressionists, it will be easy to understand the art of Tagore.

There was an art movement in Germany before the Nazi régime known as "Junge Kunst", that is to say "Young Art". Among the young artists nobody of conservative ideas was found. Most of the modern artists of Germany took to "expressionism". This is the reason why the paintings of Tagore were so much appreciated in Germany. With the advent of the present system of Government in Germany, which no longer patronised abstract forms of art, this art movement was abolished and many of the artists of this group were driven out of that country.

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century art in Europe has gone through different phases. In the eighteenth century artists used to say that "every picture tells a story", but from the middle of the nineteenth century they started saying "every picture sings a tune". In the twentieth century art has become complicated and many new "isms" have appeared on the stage. At the time of the last great war, their baffling, bewildering nature rose to a climax. Frank Rutter concludes his very excellent book *Evolution in Modern Art* (published in 1926) by saying, "Whither we are going is very difficult to see, but the journey is exciting and the road is full of interest."

But the new movements in rhythm, in composition, and in the representation not of objects but of their "essential form" or even "musical form" have to be studied with appreciation. Twentieth century art has incorporated many motifs, but we can isolate three prominent trends of inspiration : (1) The primitive forms of art as seen in animal drawings of Altimara caves in Spain, Polynesian art, and Negro art ; (2) A form of art akin to child art, full of freedom and the fancy of a child ; (3) Abstract art with an intellectual and almost mathematical bias.

Rabindranath Tagore's art should be studied in the light of these twentieth century movements, but his own peculiar genius for form and colour and the particular regional and traditional atmospheres which he unconsciously expressed, must also be taken into account. In Tagore's art the organic spirit of "constructionism" should, we suggest, be analysed with particular care so that the meeting point of his technique and his basic idea of form can be more fully explored.

## A. E. AND HIS POETRY

By MANOJ KUMAR CHATTERJEE

IN the dedication of his great gifts to Ireland and to humanity, George William Russell, popularly known as A. E., left in his lifetime memorials more enduring than any monument which his country or his friends can erect. Few Irishmen have touched the life of their country so fruitfully at so many points or with loftier purpose or more disinterested intention. The generous spirit in which he worked has been recognised far outside his country's borders and his country's honour has been exalted by his own virtue. From his earliest manhood, he shook out ideas like sparks from a torch from which each one lit his own fire, and almost every phase of Ireland's development in his lifetime was enriched and ennobled by his endeavours. The influence and the creative personality of A. E. has penetrated the fabric of the new state and has become part of Irish history. Ireland can never forget A. E.—can never willingly let him die.

From his childhood, A. E. identified himself completely with the sufferings of his own countrymen—their hopes and aspirations, their struggles and fears. Like some delicately poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned his country. Not a sob was heard within its shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. He was no St. Simeon Stylites squatting on a lofty pillar, pursuing his meditations, the world forgetting and the world forgot. Like Milton, when he felt that his country needed him, he turned his energies from poetry to politics. He was always in the thick of the fray, serene and cheerful, for he knew very well that sacrifice and a long face go ill together. Like all mystics he was eminently practical, and it was precisely this combination of extreme practical sense with deep mystic vision that had marked him off from the rest of the Irish poets and given him such an unique place both in the political and in the literary history of Ireland.

Characteristically, he had an eye for the well-being of the individual, the small farmer, the village shop-keeper, who was being crushed by the capitalist combines. He worked for co-operation amongst the small traders. He sought a union of all Irishmen,



Protestant and Catholic, of North and South. He fought with the fierceness of a man sent by God to prepare the way for the coming of the kingdom—the United Kingdom of Ireland. Along with Yeats, Dr. Hyde and Lady Gregory, he took a prominent part in Ireland's literary renaissance and the resuscitation of the long-forgotten Celtic myths and legends of the Irish people.

"We in Ireland would keep in mind our language, teach our children our history, the story of our heroes, and the long traditions of our race which stretch back to God. But we are everywhere thwarted . . . . A few ignoramuses have it in their power and are trying their utmost to obliterate the mark of God upon a nation. It is not from Shelley and Keats our peasantry derive their mental nourishment, now that they are cut off from their own part. The music that breathed Tir-nan-og and overcame men's hearts with all gentle and soft emotions is heard more faintly, and the songs of the London music halls may be heard in places where the music of the fairy enchanted the elder generations. It is the descent of a nation into hell."<sup>1</sup>

Herein speaks A. E., the passionate patriot and the traditionalist who wants to hear the great heart-beats of ancient Ireland once again in the twentieth century. The communications with the past must be maintained, its mysterious whisperings must be attended to, if salvation is to be attained at all. It is not merely a fanciful pastime ; it is both a moral and intellectual necessity.

At a time when a prosperous materialism lay on the Victorian Age like a heavy dinner, it is not strange that the poetic mind began to occupy itself with fairyland and with any other age and land but its own. Modern poetic temper condemns this as "escape", a refusal to face up to the limitations of circumstances and beat them into an art-medium, and automatically damns Tennyson, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne, the younger Yeats and A. E.

One can offer reasons for the biassed genius of the other Victorians. We can call it "escape" and leave it at that. Or we can see in it the working of the law of change, "an age desiring its opposite", and see in the mannered, jewelled verse of Tennyson and his contemporaries the unconscious desire of the time, fulfilling itself through dream, the preparation of the pendulum for the back-swing. But it was strange that just at the end of the phase, when

1 *The Dublin Magazine*, July-September (1985), p. 16.

the dreamy verse was wearing thin, two young Irish poets should arise and infuse it with new life, one W. B. Yeats, with a vigorous music and definite imagery, and the other A. E., with the mystic wisdom that comes from direct vision. Perhaps because he was more occupied with inner than with outer aspects, A. E. did not concern himself very much with the form of his verse. He was content to use the verse forms of his elders without much allowance for his individual music. The spirit with him was the important thing.

Our generation, having turned to unemphatic prose rhythms, does not yield to A. E. a full measure of justice. But the discerning will find in his verse lines in which the musical and visual qualities are blended in a perfect wholeness. They will sense behind it the all but mystic figure of a man whose song, as Seumas O' Sullivan says in his preface to Mr. Clyde's essay,<sup>1</sup> had its fountain in the heaven-world.

The publication of a new book of verse under the title, *Homeward: Songs by the Way*, in 1894, introduced a note long absent in English poetry since the time of Vaughan, Traherne, Blake and Wordsworth. One gets the sense, as one reads these poems, of a ceaseless antagonism between matter and spirit, between Earth and Heaven, as if our life on earth were a mistake and spirituality meaningless. Heaven gains, but at the expense of earth. From his sixteenth or seventeenth year, A. E. became aware, so he tells us in his first essay in his spiritual autobiography,<sup>2</sup> of a mysterious life quickening his own. Since then he longed to throw his arms about the hills, to "meet with kisses the lips of the seraph wind." "The visible world became like a tapestry blown and stirred by winds behind it: if it would but raise for an instant I knew I would be in Paradise. Every form on that tapestry appeared to be the work of Gods."<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to A. E., the Golden Age is still about us, but as Francis Thomson says, "'tis ye,—'tis your estranged faces that miss the many splendoured things." "The Golden World is all about us and that beauty is open to all, and none are shut out from it, who will turn to it and seek for it."<sup>4</sup> The trumpet still sounds ever and anon, from the hid

1 *A. E. An Essay*, by W. O. Clyde. The Moray Press (Foreword by Seumas O' Sullivan).

2 "Retrospect": *The Candle of Vision*, p. 2.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

4 "The Many-Coloured Land": *The Candle Of Vision*, p. 84.

battlements of eternity ; the angels still come to heal us, and the air still transmits the message from Paradise.

The same mentality persists in his next volume of verse, *The Earth Breath and Other Poems*, published in 1897. But the clash between Heaven and Earth assumes here a more aggressive form ; the call of Heaven is an exciting call which is far more powerful than the call of Earth. The personality of A. E. gravitates towards it to merge itself into the bosom of the Holy Father ; earth cannot hold him back. He feels the anguish of a fallen angel tormented in the inferno of Dublin. Because of some sin committed in remote ages, he was condemned to be this speck of minute life at a place somewhere in Ireland :

*We must pass like smoke or live within the spirit's fire ;  
For we can no more than smoke unto the flame return,  
If our thought has changed to dream, our will unto desire,  
As smoke we vanish though the fire may burn.*<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes when this sense of exile is too intense, the poet takes a bold plunge into the uncharted seas and begins a sojourn in imagination to the City of God. Such a poem is "The City". "Full of Zeus are the cities ; full of Zeus the harbours, and full of Zeus are all the ways of men." But this vision is momentary and is dashed to pieces in its contact with reality. The sensation is soon over and what remains is bitter memory and pain. The irritation is as acute as the pleasure was intense :

*Ah, no, the wizardry is over ; the magic flame  
That might have melted all in beauty fades as it came.  
The stars are far and faint and strange.  
The night draws down,  
Exiled from light, forlorn, I walk in Dublin town.*<sup>2</sup>

The very intensity of the vision made the recoil more unendurable. The pangs of separation are excruciating. But the status must be improved ; are we not the sons of God and is not Heaven our first and original birth-place ? The gods are our brothers. They await us, and very soon we shall partake of their banquet. We are all

1 "Immortality" : *Selected Poems*, p. 85.

2 "The City" : *Selected Poems*, p. 88.

"lost children of the stars." They beckon us to come upto them and sit upon equal thrones. "To those who cry out against romance I would say, you yourself are romance. You are the lost prince herding obscurely among the swine. The romance of your spirit is the most marvellous of stories. Your wanderings have been greater than those of Ulysses. . . . You are now a lost comrade lagging far behind in time who should have been equal and companion but was too subtle to rise to such majesty."<sup>1</sup> The poems of A. E. are an assertion of this faith. It runs like a thread of gold throughout the entire bulk of his poetry and colours his thoughts. It is a faith that dates back to the days of Vaughan, Traherne and Blake, with whom he has much in common, and who, like A. E., understood clearly the language of the gods and the politics of eternity.

Earth, therefore, must be exchanged for Heaven, for earth's "age of pain has come, and all her sister planets weep."<sup>2</sup> The heart of man is as arid as the desert sky. Hope has departed with the twilight, leaving only dumb despair. "Ah me ; how innocent our childhood was ;"<sup>3</sup> this is the cry that is wrung from the depths of A. E.'s heart. The wonder of the world is over ; the magic from the sea is gone. Imagination is crippled and fatigued and the twilight of earth has set in :

*We dwindle down beneath the skies,  
And from ourselves we pass away :  
The Paradise of memories  
Grows fainter day by day.  
The shepherd stars have shrunk within  
The world's great night will soon begin.*<sup>4</sup>

This fills A. E.'s heart with great concern and deep anguish. But hope is still there :

*Will no one ere it is too late,  
Ere fades the last memorial gleam,  
Recall for us our earlier state ?*<sup>5</sup>

1 "The Memory of the Spirit" : *The Candle of Vision*, p.p. 144-147.

2 "The Dawn of Darkness" : *Selected Poems*, p. 21.

3 "A Summer Night" : *Ibid.*, p. 60.

4 "The Twilight of Earth" : *Ibid.*, p. 72.

5 *Ibid.*

And thus while T. S. Eliot was taking us into a Waste Land, introducing it to us with a number of words and leaving us to wonder what it was he said and where on earth we were, A. E. revealed glimpses of a many-coloured land, a land of perpetual youth and fadeless beauty—far beyond the bourne of Time and Place—where “the air is weighted with scent of lilac or rose and the eyes are made gay with colour.” The motion of the wind makes there a “continuous musical vibration and the silvery sound of bells break on the ear.”<sup>1</sup> Speechless he stands, dazed and dazzled, and asks us also to enjoy the beauty of it :

*Oh, the great gates of mountains have opened once again,  
And the sound of song and dancing falls upon the ears of men,  
And the Land of Youth lies gleaming, quiet with rainbow and mirth,  
And the old enchantment lingers in the honey heart of earth.*<sup>2</sup>

We must not, therefore, live like frogs at the bottom of a marsh, knowing nothing of that many-coloured land which is “superior to this we know, yet related to it as soul to body.” A. E. has personally experienced it and his verse is not so much the utterance of a poet as the song of a prophet. His words carry authority and, unlike Yeats, their value is not dubious. The basic element in A. E.’s works, both verse and prose, is its absolute sincerity and this is the quality which has saved it from being lost in the multitudinous over-production of printed matter. He writes what he has seen, what he has heard, within himself. His inspiration is the spark at the point of concentration when Will and Thought are one. It is the way of the Yogi, a seer.

This sincerity of A. E. is thrown into more prominent relief when a comparative study is made between him and Yeats as mystics. A. E., like a true seer, has experienced, what Tagore beautifully describes, “a mystery of a meeting of the two in a creative comradeship”.<sup>3</sup> In this view, the infinite becomes defined in humanity and comes close to us so as to need our love and co-operation. This sense of double movement, a self-giving on the divine side answering to the self-giving on the human side, is found

<sup>1</sup> “The Many-Coloured Land” : *The Candle of Vision*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> “Carrowmore” : *Collected Poems*, 107.

<sup>3</sup> *The Religion of Man*, pp. 94-96.

in all great mystic literature. It is very prominently found in A. E. and therefore the mysticism of A. E. is entirely different from the symbolism which has given Yeats the reputation of being a mystic. That which is entirely decorative in the poetry of the latter is in A. E. the expression of fundamental truths. Unlike Yeats he did not seize merely upon the artistic opportunities of mysticism, though he does record his visions with the eyes and memory of an artist. The difference between the two poets is that while Yeats is a symbolist busy with the supernatural and the magic world, A. E. is a real mystic, whose preoccupation is always to win the "holy of holies" — "the light of lights", "rare vistas of white light through which the Infinite murmurs its ancient story." "They both make use of symbols, but the former does not succeed, as does the latter, in subordinating symbolism to the expression of truth. Yeats becomes enamoured, as it were, of the instrument and loses sight of his purpose. A. E. is so completely possessed by the reality of vision that the end dominates the means."<sup>1</sup> That is why in the mystic poetry of A. E. we get a touch of finality and universality of appeal and a sense of positive spiritual awareness which we do not anywhere find in the poetry of Yeats.

Like Blake who sees "a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower", A. E. thinks of earth as the floor of a cathedral where altar and presence are everywhere. The surface of it is charged with the grandeur of God; the whispers of immortality are its common features. To breathe is to inhale magical elixirs. To touch earth is to feel the influx of power as with one who has touched the mantle of the Lord. "Every flower was a word, a thought. The grass was speech; the waters were speech; the trees were speech; the winds were speech. They were the army of the voice marching on conquest and dominion over the spirit."<sup>2</sup> Looked at from this standpoint nothing in this world is trivial, nothing unsubstantial. Everything is divine and bears the signature of the eternal powers :

*But I have touched the lips of clay,  
Mother, thy rudest sod to me*

1 "The Dublin Mystics": *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*—Ernest Boyd, pp. 229-80.

2 "Retrospect": *The Candle of Vision*, p. 6.

*Is thrilled with fire of hidden clay,  
And haunted by all mystery.<sup>1</sup>*

Whispers are audible even beneath the beds of grass where constellations are hid. Golden miracles are sighted in the air ; in the wild orchards on which our foot falls "The Mighty Master holds his joy" :

*Aureoles of joy encircle  
Every blade of grass  
Where the dew-fed creatures silent  
And enraptured pass.<sup>2</sup>*

The hills too are holy and as such must be reverentially approached. They might be judgement seats. Who knows ?

*Uncover : bend the head  
And let the feet be bare,  
This air that thou breathe  
Is holy air.  
Know that this granite height  
May be a judgement throne,  
Dread then the unmovable will,  
The wrath of stone.<sup>3</sup>*

No poet in the English-speaking world has been more pantheistic than A. E. Beside him the pantheism of Shelley looks frigid and pale. Blake is the only rival, but even he cannot rise fully up to A. E.

The poems of A. E. are marked by a frantic search for truth. To A. E. truth is higher than any religion. "The truth-seeker gravitates towards the true. One should always be seeking." In some of the letters which he wrote to a friend in Belfast who shared his interest in mysticism and poetry and which the editor of the famous *Dublin Magazine* was very kind to publish, this attitude of A. E. is beautifully expressed :

"I wish you could make this your motto, it is mine : 'There is no religion higher than truth.' Remember, I don't want you to accept my opinions. I only want you to try and find out for yourself what is right. This is the law of

<sup>1</sup> "Dust" : *Selected Poems*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "The Earth Breath" : *Ibid*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> *A Holy Hill*, p. 120.

advance. Whenever you stretch out an arm there you will find an arm to meet yours. Every new faculty you develop will gain for you a new friend who has this one in common with you. The secret of advance is to do what is right and beautiful and trust to the justice of Nature ; the laws are inevitable, there is no escape from them." <sup>1</sup>

This is A. E.'s final acceptance and this is the message that he wants to inculcate :

*Away, the great life calls. I leave  
For Beauty, Beauty's rarest flower,  
For Truth, the lips that Ne'er deceive,  
For love, I leave Love's haunted bower.*

Here is the renunciation of a true mystic who cannot be seduced by appearances. And this renunciation entails bodily sufferings for which he is thoroughly prepared. Thus in the preface to the 1919 edition of his *Collected Poems* he writes : "When I first discovered for myself how near was the King in His beauty I thought I would be the singer of the happiest songs. Forgive me, Spirit of my spirit, for this, that I have found the mystery told in tears and understood Thee better in sorrow than in joy." Pain is an aspect of the eternal unfolding of joy. How near it is to Indian conception and how near again it is to Tagore's song whom he has the keenest affinity with : "I shall know you by the sudden delight of my heart melting into sadness of tears" ( *Gitanjali* ).

This brings us incidentally to a discussion of A. E.'s debt to India and her culture. Special significance attaches to poems, written on Indian subjects by any Westerners and more specially by A. E. who himself had drunk deep of her fountain to slake his spiritual thirst. From his very boyhood A. E. used to take keen interest in everything pertaining to the East and Johnston's *Translation from the Upanishads* in 1896 seemed but to accentuate it. The *Irish Theosophist* also, which used to be published in collaboration with Yeats, helped in this direction.

But whatever the cause and whatever the source, the fact is that A. E. was a man deeply saturated in the wisdom of the East. To

<sup>1</sup> "Passages from early letters of A.E." *Dublin Magazine*, January—March 1940, p. 18.



A. E., Gaelic imagination and Indian imagination are fundamentally the same and identical. "The Earth-world, Mid-world, Heaven-world and God-world spoken of in the Indian scriptures are worlds our Gaelic ancestors had also knowledge of."<sup>1</sup> Hence spring some of his attempts to correlate Eastern with Celtic legends, as in "A Dream of Angus", "The Meditations of Ananda", and the "Midnight Blossom."

Speaking about Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau, A. E. writes to a friend in Belfast when he was a very young man : "But we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads contain such God-like fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back thro' a thousand passionate lives full of feverish strife and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure."<sup>2</sup>

There are many poems written by A. E. on Indian subjects and Indian culture. In "Indian" he describes the beauty and physical features of Brahma, the God of Creation in Hindu Mythology.

*Shadowy-petalled, like the lotus, loom the mountains with their snows,  
Through the sapphire Soma rising such a flood of glory throws,  
As when first in yellow splendour Brahma from the Lotus rose.*

The poem "Krishna" is imitated from a fragment of the Vaishnava scriptures. The epithets, "King of Kings", "Light of Lights", "Prince of Peace", "the spendthrift of the Heavenly Gold" describe the Lord whom the Hindus worship as their Supreme God. About the eternal sound OM, the sacred mantra of the Hindus, he can write with the same amount of confidence as an Indian :

*The word which Brahma at his dawn  
Outbreathes and endeth at his night,  
Whose tide of sound so rolling on  
Gives birth to orbs of pearly light.<sup>3</sup>*

1 "The Memory of the Spirit" : *The Candle of Vision*, p. 149.

2 "Passages from early letters of A.E." : *Dublin Magazine*, January—March, 1940, pp. 10-11.

3 *Collected Poems*, p. 67.

# AN ASSOCIATION BORN OF AN URGENT NEED

## A SHORT STORY

By RAINER MARIA RILKE

[ Rainer Maria Rilke ( 1875-1926 ), German author born at Prague. He studied in Prague, Munich and Berlin, travelled in Russia, Italy and France, and frequented chiefly artistic circles, acting at one time as Rodin's secretary. He afterwards lived in Vienna, Munich and Switzerland, where he died in Dec. 1926. Rilke's work includes both prose and verse ; but the latter is the better known, and from 1900-10 he, with Stephan George, was Germany's foremost lyric poet. His writing is deeply artistic and deeply musical at once ; a religious mysticism colours an extraordinarily rich and melodious style, which absorbed the best influences of most of the important European literatures. Its unique delicacy fully compensates for a certain lack of breadth and grandeur.—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, '14th Ed.]

I am just now being informed that our town has also a kind of association for artists. It has recently been founded and, as one can easily imagine, out of an urgent need. A rumour is afloat that it "flourishes". When associations do not know at all what to do, they flourish ; they have heard that this ought to be done in order to be an association in the proper sense of the word.

I need not mention that Herr Baum is honorary member, founder, standard bearer and all the rest combined and that he experiences some difficulty in distinguishing the various posts of honour. He has sent me a young man to invite me to participate in the "evenings". I thanked him as a matter of course most politely and I added that since five years I have been doing just the contrary. "Imagine," I explained to him with fitting seriousness, "that since that time not a minute passes without my leaving some association or other, and yet there are associations which still, so to speak, contain me." The young man looked, at first with horror, then with an expression of respectful sympathy, at my feet. He must have recognized their "worn-out" look, for he nodded his head comprehendingly. That pleased me much and as I had to go out just then, I suggested to him to accompany me a little on my way. We went across the town and beyond, towards the station, for I had something to do in the neighbourhood. We talked on a diversity of subjects ; I came to know that the young man was a musician. He informed me modestly about it ; he did not look it, though. Apart from his overflowing hair, he distinguished himself by a great and, as it were,

ever-ready willingness to help. On this not very long walk he lifted up two of my gloves, carried my umbrella while I was searching for something in my pockets, blushing called my attention to something that had got entangled in my beard, to some soot that had landed on my nose, and his fingers in the meantime grew longer as though they wished to draw near my face in that helpful manner of his. In his over-eagerness the young man at times remained behind and picked out with obvious relish the withered leaves which, while floating down, had remained hanging in the branches of the shrubs. I realized that through these constant delays I would miss my train ( the station was still rather far off ), and I decided to tell my companion a story in order to keep him a little at my side. I started right away.

"I know of the outcome of such a foundation which rested upon a very real need. You will see. Not very long ago three painters met by accident in an old town. The three painters, naturally, did not speak of art. So, at least, it seemed. They spent the evening in the backroom of an old inn, telling each other travel-adventures and experiences of all kinds ; their stories became gradually shorter and more deliberate, and at last there remained only a few jokes which they continually flung hither and thither. In order to prevent all misunderstanding, I must say at once that they were real artists, intended by nature, as it were ; not accidental ones. This dull evening in the backroom cannot change this fact ; and you will see immediately what happened later. Other people, laymen, entered the inn ; the painters felt disturbed and left. The moment they were out of doors, they were men transformed. They walked in the middle of the lane, at a little distance from each other. On their faces there were still the traces of laughter, a remarkable disorder in their features, but their eyes were already serious and contemplative. Suddenly the one in the middle nudged his neighbour on the right. He understood him immediately. There was in front of them a lane, narrow and filled with a delicate, warm twilight. It ascended slightly so that its perspective came out very favourably and it was strangely mysterious and yet again intimate. The three painters let the scenery act upon them for a minute. They said nothing, for they knew, one cannot speak it out. That is why they had become painters, because there are things that one cannot say.

"Suddenly the moon rose somewhere, drew the silvery outline of the gable of a house, and out of a courtyard there rose a song. 'Crude straining after effects,' grumbled the one in the middle, and they continued their walk. They marched now nearer to each other, although they still needed the whole breadth of the lane. Thus they unexpectedly came upon a square. Now it was the one on the right who called the others' attention to it. In this broader and less confined space the moon was not a disturbing factor ; on the contrary, it was actually necessary that it was there. It made the square appear larger, provided the houses with a startling, listening life, and the illuminated plain surface of the square was, in the very centre, most inconsiderately interrupted by a fountain and its heavy clashing shadow,—an audacity which pleased the painters greatly. They drew nearer to each other and sucked, so to speak, at the breasts of this landscape. But they were unpleasantly interrupted. Quick, nimble steps approached ; out of the shadow of the fountain the figure of a man detached itself, received those steps and whatever else belonged to them with the usual tenderness, and the beautiful square became all of a sudden a pitiful commonplace picture from which the three painters turned away as *one* painter. 'Again that cursed literary element !' exclaimed the one on the right, applying the correct technical term to the loving couple at the fountain.

"United in their resentment, the painters wandered aimlessly about the town, all the time discovering new motives, but also every time freshly enraged by the manner in which some trivial circumstance ruined the stillness and simplicity of each picture. At about midnight they were sitting together in the inn, in the room of the left one, the youngest, and didn't dream of going to sleep. Their nocturnal excursion had evoked within them a multitude of plans and schemes, and as they had also proved that they were fundamentally of one and the same opinion, they exchanged now, greatly interested, their respective points of view. I cannot assert that they used irreproachable language ; they rather fought with a few words which no layman would have understood, but they understood each other mutually so well that none of their neighbours could fall asleep till four o'clock in the morning. This long meeting was,

however, crowned by a real visible success. Something like an association had been created ; that means to say, it was already there the moment the intentions and aims of the three artists had proved to be so similar that one could but with difficulty distinguish one from the other.

"The first common decision of the "association" was immediately put into practice. They settled down three hours away in the open country and hired a peasant farm. To remain in the town would have been meaningless for the time being. First they wanted to acquire out there the 'style', a certain personal self-confidence, the hand, and by whatever name those things are called without which a painter may live, but not paint. This living together, the 'association', in fact, should help to foster all these virtues,—but especially the honorary member of the association : Nature. By 'nature' the painter imagined everything that God himself had made or might have made under certain circumstances. A hedge, a house, a fountain, all these objects are mostly made by men. But when they stand for some time in a landscape, so that they adopt certain qualities from the trees and the shrubs and from their environment in general, they, as it were, are transferred to the ownership of God and thereby also become the property of the painter. For God and the artist have in common sometimes the same wealth and sometimes the same poverty.

"Well, God never thought that 'nature' spreading around the common peasant farm constituted a particular wealth. It did not last long, however, before the painters made Him think better of it. The landscape was flat, one could not deny it. But due to the depth of its shadows and the height of its lights, there existed precipices and peaks, and in between there were the innumerable medians of wide meadows and fertile fields, all of them corresponding to the material value of a mountainous region. There were only a few trees and almost all of the same variety, botanically speaking. By the emotions, however, which they expressed, the longing of some branch or the tender reverence of the trunk, they seemed to be like a large number of individual beings, and some pasture had a personality which by the diversity and depth of its character provided the painters with many surprises. Their enthusiasm was so great, they were so greatly

united in their work, that it didn't mean anything at all when after a lapse of six months, each of the three painters shifted into his own house ; that was certainly due to considerations of space.

"But something else must, however, be mentioned here. The painters wanted to celebrate, in some way or other, the anniversary of their association out of which had come, in such a short time, so many good things, and each one of them decided to paint, for that purpose, the house of the others. On the day fixed by them they met, each one of them with his pictures. It so happened that they just then talked about their respective lodgings, their situation, usefulness, etc. They became greatly agitated, and so it came to pass that they forgot during the conversation the oil-paintings they had brought with them and late at night they arrived home with their unopened parcels. It is difficult to understand how such a thing could have happened. They did not, however, show each other their pictures in the near future either, and whenever one of them visited another ( which, due to hard work, happened but rarely ), he would find on his easel sketches from that first period when they still lived together on the peasant farm.

"But once the one on the right ( he lived even now on the right and can be called thus henceforth ) discovered in the house of the one whom I have called the Youngest, one of those aforementioned anniversary-pictures which had never been revealed. He looked at it thoughtfully for some time, went with it towards the light and suddenly laughed : 'Look, I didn't know it ; your conception of my house is not at all bad. A truly clever caricature. What exaggerations of form and colour, what a bold execution of my, I admit, slightly accentuated gable ; really, there is something in it.' The Youngest did not make a very intelligent face at this,—on the contrary ; in his dismay he went to the one who lived in the middle in order to let himself be pacified by him who was the most level-headed among them ; for, after such incidents, he was always despondent and liable to doubt his own gifts. He didn't find him at home, and while rummaging a little in his studio, he was immediately drawn to a picture which he found strangely repulsive. It represented a house, but a proper fool must be living in it. What a facade ! It could only have been built by one who had no idea about

architecture and who applied his mediocre, pictorial ideas on a building. All of a sudden the Youngest put away the picture as though it had burned his fingers. On its left margin he had read the date of that first anniversary and beside it : the House of our Youngest. Quite naturally, he did not wait for the master of the house to come, but returned home rather out of sorts.

"The Youngest and the one on the right became cautious since that time. They looked for remote subjects and, of course, did not think of getting anything ready for the celebration of the second anniversary of the foundation of their so useful association. All the more eagerly did the one in the middle, who suspected nothing, work at a subject situated near the habitation of his neighbour on the right. Something undefinable restrained him from choosing his house as the main pretext of his work. When he brought the finished picture to the one who lived on the right, he found him strangely reserved ; he only gave it a cursory glance and made a passing remark. Then, after a time, he said : 'By the way, I didn't know at all that you had been so far away recently.' 'Why, far ? Away ?' The one in the middle didn't understand a word. 'Well, this clever work here,' replied the other, 'is evidently some Dutch motive.' The level-headed one in the middle had a hearty laugh. 'Exquisite, this Dutch motive is situated in front of your door.' And he didn't at all want to calm himself. But the other member of the association did not laugh, not in the least. He gave a painful smile and suggested : 'A good joke.' 'Not in the least. Just open the door, I shall show you just now'—and the one in the middle himself walked towards the door. 'Stop !' ordered the master of the house. 'I herewith declare that I have never seen this landscape and that I shall also never see it because for my eyes it is not capable of existing at all.' 'But—' said his surprised friend. 'You insist ?' continued the other in great irritation. "Be it then. I am leaving today. You force me to go away, for I do not wish to live in such a landscape. Do you understand ?' With this the friendship was finished, but not the association ; for till now it has not been formally dissolved. Nobody had thought of doing so, and one can very rightly say that it has spread all over the world."

"You see," interrupted me the ever-ready young man, whose lips

had become constantly more pointed, "again one of those colossal successes of life in an association ; I am sure many distinguished masters came forth from this fervent alliance." "Permit me," I pointed out, and he, quite unexpectedly, wiped the dust off one of my sleeves, "this was really only the introduction to my story, though it is more complicated than the story itself. Well, as I said, the association spread all over the world, and that is a fact. Its three members escaped terror-stricken from each other. Nowhere did they find rest. Each one of them was always afraid, the other may recognize a piece of his land and profane it by his infamous representation ; and when they had reached three opposite points of the earth's circumference, every one of them had the desperate idea that his sky, the sky which he had painfully acquired by his own ever-growing idiosyncrasies, could still be reached by the others. At this overwhelming moment they started, all three simultaneously, to go backwards with their easels, and, five steps more, they would have fallen from the edge of the earth into infinite space and would have had now to execute at a frantic speed the double movement round the earth and round the sun. But God's pity and attention prevented this cruel disaster. God realized the danger and, at the very last moment, ( and what else could He have done ! ) He stepped out in the middle of the sky. The three painters were greatly alarmed. They put their easels firmly on the ground and the palette on the top of it. Such an opportunity could not be missed. God does not appear every day and not to everyone. And every one of the painters naturally thought that God stood only before him. Besides, they got increasingly absorbed in their interesting work. And every time God wants to go back into heaven, St. Lucas implores Him to remain a little while longer outside, until the three painters finish their pictures."

"And the gentlemen have undoubtedly already exhibited these pictures, perhaps even sold them ?" softly questioned the musician.

"What do you imagine," I warded him off. "They still paint God and will paint Him till their death. Should they, however, once more in their lifetime meet ( which I consider highly improbable ) and show each other the pictures they have made of God, who knows, perhaps these pictures would show no dissimilarity at all."



There was already the station. I still had five minutes time. I thanked the young man for his company and wished him good luck for his young association which he so excellently represented. He softly and with his right forefinger took off the dust which seemed to oppress the windowsills of the small waiting-room, and was deeply engrossed in his thoughts. I confess, I already flattered myself that my little story had put him into a pensive mood. When at parting he drew a red thread out of my glove, I thankfully advised him : "You can return by the fields, that way it is quicker than on the road."

"Excuse me," the ever-ready young man bowed to me, "I shall again take the road. I'm just trying to remember where it was. While you were good enough to tell me something really significant, I thought I saw a scarecrow in the field, in an old coat, and one of the sleeves—it seems to me it was the left—had remained entangled on a stake, so that it did not wave at all. I now feel it incumbent upon me, so to speak, to contribute my little bit to the common interests of humanity which seems to me also a kind of association in which everyone has to perform something, by restoring the left sleeve to its proper purpose, namely, to wave. . . ."

The young man withdrew with a most amiable smile. But I had almost missed my train.

Fragments of this story were sung by the young man at one of the "evenings" of the association. God knows, who invented the music for him. Herr Baum, the standard bearer, brought it along to the children, and the children still remember some of the tunes.

( *Translated from the original German by Dr. Alex Aronson.* )



# TAGORE'S "CHITRA"

## *A Critical Study*

By K. R. NARAYANAM

CHITRA is a lyrical drama. In it there is so much that is purely poetical as well as that is purely dramatic that one does not know whether to consider it as drama or as poem. The truth is that it is both, otherwise it would not be lyrical drama. Dramatic situations poetically conceived and lyrically expressed—that is what we get in CHITRA. But the poetry is so overpowering that the essential drama behind it is apt to elude the attention of a casual reader. The lyrical speeches, which even in English prose remind one of the beautiful songs in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, are all informed from within by a dramatic spirit which gives them power and passion, besides sweetness and beauty.

There is an amazing dramatic development in this short piece. Tagore constantly places his characters in conflict-situations out of which they always emerge changed and chastened. This is how he works out the growth of character. Chitra, the warrior-girl who would be a boy, grows into a full woman, and Arjuna, the Kshatriya who would be an ascetic, becomes an ideal lover. But the course of action culminating in this consummation is not at all smooth. They have to face crisis after crisis, which seem almost to break them, but out of which they manage to come out triumphant by virtue of the change in the right spiritual direction their minds have undergone. This is too delicate a task for a dramatist. What is required here is not an isolated but harmonious growth of two personalities. Chitra has to grow, Arjuna has to grow, and they have to grow together and side by side. By a harmonized use of drama, poetry and philosophy, Tagore succeeds in representing such a growth of character that in the end the man and the woman attain the same spiritual height in which a union is possible.

It is interesting to study CHITRA from this point of view of dramatic movement. The first scene shows Chitra in one of her critical situations. A girl brought up as a boy, who can bend a bow or chase a deer, is suddenly brought face to face with a man who has been the hero of her dreams—Arjuna. For the first time she feels herself a woman and knows that a man is before her. At the same time there rises in her the consciousness of her own imperfection, her "unattractive plainness" which stands in the way of her winning Arjuna. In her great love she prays to the gods to endow her with superb beauty for one year. It is an impossible wish. But here steps in Tagore and makes the gods grant her prayer. By one magic touch the conflict-situation is converted into a wonderful harmony. Thus in Chitra there is a union between heart and body—the passion of the heart embodied in the rapture of the flesh. And there stands Chitra luxuriating in the richness of her emotions and glorying in the loveliness of her body. She is a thing of beauty, too beautiful to be resisted by a Kshatriya turned ascetic.

The second scene represents a corresponding change in Arjuna also. The new Chitra has turned the hermit into a "love-hungered guest". His description of her by the lake is an impassioned love-poem. "It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet." But the tribute is to her sensuous, and not spiritual, beauty, and her sensuous beauty is an illusion which will last only a year. The thought of this fills the girl's heart with anguish. Her "immortal longings" are brought face to face with the consciousness of her transitoriness. Her very body has now become her rival. It is a rare realization, and it marks another stage in the wonderful development of Chitra's personality. She realizes that her "own true self", that "unattractive plainness" she once hated is nobler than her borrowed beauty. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty"—that is Chitra's realization.

But Tagore has to work up the mind of Arjuna also to the same spiritual level before he could reveal Chitra stripped off her false garments. For a sensuous Arjuna would spurn an unattractive Chitra, and make a tragedy of her great love. So in the sixth scene Arjuna is shown in a spiritual melting-pot. From the pleasure-grove of the forest his mind wanders back to his own dear home. "On such rainy days," he says, "we five brothers would go to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were glad times." These tenderly human thoughts with a slight touch of sadness give Arjuna a relief from the madness of dalliance. He is again on earth and is no longer satisfied with a dream-Chitra. He wants something more real and requests her to surrender herself to "the bonds of name and home and parentage." Here is the dreamer groping for the real.

This change is developed to its climax in the eighth scene. The sudden appearance of the villagers into Arjuna's dream-land serves a double dramatic purpose. The news they bring that Manipur is being harassed by robbers stirs up the Kshatriya spirit in him laid to sleep for a while by the music of love; and the thought of Manipur's warrior-queen (who is the real Chitra), manly and heroic, is set against the cloying sensuousness that is the dream-Chitra. Availing of this spiritual crisis, Chitra asks Arjuna whether he would still love her if she were to cast off all her physical charms. Arjuna replies: "Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate *you*, that bare simplicity of Truth." This marks the spiritual climax of the play. Both Arjuna and Chitra are now on the same plane of realization when a complete union is inevitable.

The one brief year of beauty is fast dying out. But before that Chitra is pressed dry of honey. Such is the philosophy of Tagore, not an ascetic negation of life, but a full-hearted acceptance of all its joys and sorrows. Even after the vanishing of the physical charms there still remains something in Chitra which is eternally attractive to Arjuna—that "breath and finer spirit of beauty" which is in the countenance of true womanhood. "The gift that I bring to you is the heart of a woman," says she. She is a woman pure and simple. Then follows

Tagore's picture of what Chitra has become at last. "I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of life, then you will know my true self." Her reference to the child in her womb whom she would bring up as a second Arjuna, gives the picture the finishing touch of heroic motherliness. The warrior, impatient of the enchantment of the senses, is finally subdued : "Beloved, my life is full."

There is thus a complete evolution in CHITRA, emotional and spiritual ; the drama is an artistic whole with the unity, completeness and fullness of a song. Indeed, one is tempted to say that CHITRA is a musically conceived drama—so beautiful and harmonious is the impression it leaves upon one's mind.\* This idea is confirmed when one remembers that Tagore himself was a musician, and could see the essential harmony in the heart of things.

\* It is interesting to recall that the Poet later on set the whole drama to music which was staged as a dance-drama in Calcutta in 1936.—*Ed.*



## REVIEWS

**MAHATMA GANDHI** : Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work.

Edited by Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Kitabistan, Allahabad.

Price Rs. 9/-.

DESPITE the competition of a host of publishing firms since the outbreak of the war, the Kitabistan continues to maintain its leading position as a foremost Indian Publishing House. We congratulate it on its latest achievement in reprinting for the benefit of the readers in India the above volume which was originally published by Messrs. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, on the occasion of the Mahatma's seventieth birthday in 1939. Almost all the contributors, most of whom are from outside India, are men and women eminent in the field of thought, social service or public life. The distinguished editor has compiled a symposium in which some of the leading minds of the world have focussed the light of their admiring intellects on the personality of one who is undoubtedly and by common consent the noblest and the most inspiring, as he is the most baffling and the most enigmatic, specimen of humanity to-day. Not all the contributions are mere tributes of admiration. Most of them are thoughtful studies, some of them even frankly critical. But all of them bear an awareness of the greatness of the subject they discuss, and are therefore full of sincerity and humility, even when they are critical. It is a book which will be invaluable to all those who wish to read the significance of Gandhij's life and work in a wider perspective than is generally available to his countrymen who are apt to forget that the message of their national leader has an appeal which transcends all national boundaries.

To tempt potential buyers, here are some quotations selected at random :

"I first visited him at Sabarmati in the spring of 1928. 'What,' I asked him, 'shall I say when I get home to England?' 'You must tell the English people,' he replied, 'to get off our backs.'"—Horace Alexander.

"One who could mix a spiritual and a temporal devotion, without injury to either, could not but be a great and arresting figure of our days."—Ernest Barker.

"The name of Gandhi even in his lifetime has passed beyond the meaning of an individual to the meaning of a way of living in our troubled modern world."—Pearl Buck.

"We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—a beacon to the generations to come."—Albert Einstein.

"To meet such a convergence of two madnesses—the blind submission of free men to the powers of murderous machines and then to the dictates of a group-folly as blind as and even more destructive than the murder machines themselves, there was needed a man as ingenious as the inventors of the diabolic

instruments of destruction and as dynamic as the demoniac leaders who were stampeding their peoples into mutual massacre. There can be little doubt that this man will be recognized by historians as M. K. Gandhi."—Gerald Heard.

"Thwarted and imprisoned, derided and scorned, he has but stepped higher and higher in the scale of human life. ... For this age he is the *type* of the civilized and humanized man."—Carl Heath.

"What other men have taught as a personal discipline, Gandhi has transformed into a social programme for the redemption of the world. Gandhi is great among all the great of ages past."—J.H. Holmes.

"I believe that Mahatma Gandhi's life is the most valuable in the present day, and while sending him greetings on his seventieth birthday, I could wish that he were many years younger, in order that the world might have reasonable hope of his enlightened leadership for many years longer."—Laurence Housman.

"There is a touch of cynicism but a substratum of truth in the remark that politics is a sordid game, and that its exigencies often demand a compromise with conscience. Success in it, so it is said, generally goes to the man who is not much encumbered by scruples. But here is Mahatma Gandhi, who is the most conscientious, scrupulous and principled of Indians and yet is the most successful politician of them all! He is the eternal enigma of India."—Sir Mirza Ismail.

"It is in this sense that Gandhi is a moral genius. He has announced a method for the settlement of disputes which may not only supersede the method of force, but, as men grow more powerful in the art of destruction, must supersede it if civilization is to survive. No doubt his method has for the moment failed; no doubt he has promised more than he can perform, but if men had never promised more than it was possible for them to perform, the world would be the poorer, for the achieved reform is the child of the unachieved ideal. Because Gandhi has believed, he is himself believed, and his authority in the world, though unbacked by force, is greater than that of any other man."—C. E. M. Joad.

"The generation to which he belongs has produced no more consistent, wholehearted defender of the Right than he has been."—George Lansbury.

"For the world today it is as the living exponent of the power of non-violence that Mahatma Gandhi shines in our midst like a beacon light. 'Others abide our question; thou art free ... out topping knowledge,'"—Ethel Mannin.

"Our pacifists argue and hurry about; ... Gandhi does not hurry. and he is sometimes in prison where he does not speak and hardly eats. And yet millions of men in India understand and follow him because they are aware of his spirit."

—Dr. Maria Montessori.

"Bluntly stated, the economic object of boycotting Lancashire goods was to provide work, wages and food for one set of people in India and to deprive another set in England of work, wages and food. Between starving and killing there is no notable moral difference."—Arthur Moore, ex-Editor, the *Statesman*. (A superb specimen of the outraged Tory righteousness.)

"The spiritual authority of one unarmed man over great multitudes is in itself wonderful, but when that man not only abjures violence and helps his enemies in their need, but also recognizes his own human fallibility, he claims unanswerably the admiration of the whole world. From a distant country, from a quite alien civilization, . . . I gladly give this great man the title his disciples claim for him and hail with reverence 'Mahatma'."—Gilbert Murray.

"The treatment that this 'well-descended spirit' has so often received at the hands of Europeans must remain a matter for the heaviest shame."—Llewelyn Powys.

"A well-known verse of our famous Indian poet, Sir Mohammad Iqbal, fits in with a case such as this. 'The heart of a King trembles at the sight of a beggar who begs not.' "—Sir Abdul Qadir.

"And we, intellectuals, men of science, men of letters, artists, ... we offer our fervent homage of love and veneration to our master and brother, Gandhi, who is realizing, in the heart and in action, our ideal of humanity to come."—Romain Rolland.

"It is a strange thing that Christians should feel, as many of us do, that the best Christian in the world to-day is a Hindu."—Maude Royden.

"Not seldom I feel myself to be opponent, not his supporter. Yet all the while I am sure that here is a man who with utter sincerity and utter self-sacrifice, is striving passionately, by this road or by that road, towards good ends."—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Samuel.

"In gaol he had prepared for me a very useful pair of sandals which he presented to me when he was set free ! I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man !"—Field Marshal Smuts.

"The magnanimity of Indians fills me, every minute of my life, with astonishment. They have shown, as individuals and as a race, that they can rise above resentment, as I the Englishman feel I could never rise above it, if I were in their shoes. Gandhi *ought* to have hated every white face to the end of his life—yet he did not !"—Edward Thompson.

"The quality of Mr. Gandhi's leadership has lifted the national movement in India to a level above that of the terrible nationalisms of the present day."—H. G. Wood.

"Whatever may, at any time, have been the differences dividing his thought and my own, I have never failed to recognize the deep spiritual force by which he is moved, and which has always led him to count no sacrifice too great for the causes in which he believes."—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax. ( Does his Excellency still hold to that belief ? )

**TALES OF FOUR FRIENDS** : By Pramatha Chaudhuri. Translated by  
Indira Devi Chaudhurani. Published by Visva-Bharati. Price—Rs. 1/8.

THIS translation of Mr. Pramatha Chaudhuri's "Chār Iyari Katha" brings that renowned quartette of stories to a wider circle of readers than it has hitherto had.

Late one evening in Calcutta, four anglicized Bengalis are held up by foul weather at their club. As they wait for the storm to abate, each tells a tale of which the hero is himself and the heroine an Englishwoman. The four friends are all highly-educated, "England-returned" men ; and on this particular night of violent rain and storm they are, as one of them says, in that mood when their normal sophisticated selves seem to have dropped from them, awakening in their stead parts of their being that usually remain dormant or repressed. This explanation of the occasion of the stories and of the character and frame of mind of their tellers is necessary in order that they may not be airily dismissed as incredible. All four stories are finely told, with powerful dramatic effects achieved not only through swift and vivid description but also through energetic and revealing dialogue. Of the four, however, Somnath's story has always been my favourite, partly, perhaps, for the name of the hero, but mainly because of the unforgettable portrayal of the strangely elusive yet fascinating heroine, the dramatic intensity of the plot, and a poignance of pathos which no cloak of irony and persiflage put on by the lovers can quite hide.

Even apart from the story-interest, I regard "Chār Iyari Katha" as Mr. Chaudhuri's most distinctive work. The tales in it with their end-links supplement each other to stamp on the reader's mind, more clearly than anything else he has written, the impression not only of his imaginative genius, but of his temperament and the characteristic qualities of his mind. As revealed here, it is a sensitive and subtle mind, quick to note every feature of the men and things it comes across, just the least bit tinged with cynicism, perhaps, but never unfeeling or splenetic, never out of humour, unerring in its sense of proportion, and unfailing in its *savoir vivre*. I consider the book distinctive also because it fully exhibits the precision, the verve, and the amazing brilliance of Mr. Chaudhuri's famous prose style.

In translation the work must, of necessity, lose some of the magic of its language and style, and it is surprising that it retains as much as it does of its original charm. The stories in English are just as enthralling as in Bengali. The reader will doubtless be caught by the opening lines and carried along with impetuous speed by the flow of the narration. That the book still exercises so much of the old spell even in a translation is a tribute to the high quality not only of the stories themselves, but of Mrs. Chaudhuri's rendering of them as well. This excellent English version will undoubtedly win new admirers for the author. But I am also sure that many who had the privilege of the author's acquaintance in the great days of the "Sabuj Patra" and had read these stories when they were



first published over a quarter of a century back, will turn to them again in their new form with delight, and perhaps experience a faint stirring of the memory of vanished days and scenes of long ago.

Somnath Maitra.

*THE NATURE OF SELF*: By A. C. Mukerji, M. A., Reader in Philosophy,  
Allahabad University. The Indian Press Ltd. Allahabad.  
2nd. Ed. Price : Rs. 7-8-0.

SELDOM does it occur to the lot of a reviewer to find himself *en rapport* with the main drift, as much as with the *modus operandi*, of an author's undertaking. Even more remarkable about the book under review is its intellectual aristocratism—that atmosphere of dignified aloofness which is impervious to the craze for popularisation that has invaded the philosophical world of to-day. Classical in respect of the theme chosen, classical in conception and classical alike in presentation, the present treatise on "The Nature of Self" may, with strict justice, be said to have reached that highwater mark of perfection which is at the farthest remove from the present-day milk-and-water type of performance that is dispensed in the name of a comparative study in Philosophy. With a refreshing candour and unanswerable logic withal, our author tells us: "Comparative philosophy has so far been either predominantly historical and descriptive, or it has contented itself with discovering stray similarities between Western and Indian thoughts. No serious attempt, as far as I know, has yet been made to undertake a comparative study for mutual supplementation of arguments and consequent clarification of issues; yet this alone can suggest the paths to new constructions and thus help the development of philosophic thought." There could be no more authentic description of the actualities as well as possibilities of comparative study in philosophy; and it is delightful to trace how the master mind of the author threads its way through the intricate mazes of dialectic into the Promised Land. In short, our author can rightfully claim to have redeemed the pledge of "new constructions" in and through this illuminating treatise of his.

Ever since the oracular utterance of "gnôthe seauton" ("Know thyself"), or more correctly perhaps, since the religio-philosophical exhortation of "Ātmānam Viddhi" of a still greater antiquity, the nature of self has been the focal point at which the converging lines of philosophical reflexion in the East and in the West have invariably met. It is interesting to find that Dr. Tagore has, with the sweet reasonableness of the poet-philosopher that he is, given a modernised version of the age-long wisdom of the East. In his introductory lecture on "Man's Universe" in his *Hibbert Lectures* we read:—"Creation has been made possible through the continual self-surrender of the unit to the universe. And the spiritual universe of Man is also ever claiming self-renunciation from the individual units. This spiritual process is not so easy as the physical one in the

physical world, for the intelligence and will of the units have to be tempered to those of the universal spirit." Which may be achieved only "through the surrender of our individual self to the Universal Self"; for "our universe is the sum-total of what Man feels, knows, imagines, reasons to be, and of whatever is knowable to him now or in another time," and its "reality is associated with the Universal human mind which comprehends all time and all possibilities of realization." Following many a tortuous path-way, our author conducts us to the foundational truth "that Reality is wider than the world of definable objects", that "individual self" is "the eternal, unconditional, conscious principle", which, "though undefinable, is the indispensable support of all objects and of all relations among the objects." May that "Light whose smile kindles the universe" concentrate its rays once more, in the distracted world of to-day, on the long-forgotten Nature of the Self.

Saroj K. Das.

*BEGGAR MY NEIGHBOUR* : By Lionel Fielden. The International Book House Ltd. Bombay. Price : Rs. 3/-

SPONSORED as the case for India, *Beggar My Neighbour* is no crude example of special pleading on our behalf, nor any specious apologia on any one's, for the matter of that. It is too much of a master-piece to be dismissed as a mere ephemeral monument to a passing phase in current politics, dealing, as it manifestly does, with contemporary problems. For, the real merit and worth of the book lies in its being a sincere attempt on the part of the author to improve the heart of his compatriots and enlarge their moral consciousness, of course, in relation to an ostensibly political cause. Rarely in the whole range of the rather prolific lore that the Indian cause has provoked in recent years has any production been marked by such moral fervour and burning sincerity and, above all, such deep understanding of the Indian outlook on life and politics. We cannot think of another recent writing that is at once so candid and profound. It must, however, stir acids of distaste in those who are so largely responsible for the seemingly insoluble impasse of the Indian situation today. And it is worse than futile to speculate if the case for India put in the inimitable manner and style of Lionel Fielden will ever help to rouse the slumbering conscience or dissipate the insensate unreason and placid unconcern of those who under a plea of doing justice to the case for India have really dispensed with it.

A. K. C.

*INDIA SINCE CRIPPS* : By Horace Alexander. A Penguin Special.

MR. HORACE ALEXANDER has been for years a sympathetic student of Indian affairs. He was a friend of Rabindranath Tagore and remains a friend of Gandhiji. He visited India in 1942-43 as head of the Friends Ambulance Unit in Calcutta and was an eye-witness to the most unhappy and tragic period in Indian History.

He had opportunities of intimate personal contact with Gandhiji, Jawaharlal and other Indian leaders in June 1942 ; he watched the aftermath of the fateful August of that year ; was present at the Agha Khan's palace during Gandhiji's fast ; saw with his own eyes in Midnapore the ravages of the terrible cyclone and was a daily witness in Calcutta of the ghastly tragedy of the famine in Bengal. Those of us who had the privilege of meeting him at that time were not a little impressed by his genuine sympathy with the victims of this collective tragedy and by—what seemed to us then—his deep sorrow at the part played by the representatives of his nation in it. Some of us even thought : here is a true compatriot of that great and noble Englishman who so richly deserved being called Christ's Faithful Apostle. He might be to India what C. F. Andrews once was. But it seems now on reading the above book that we were carried away a little too much by our wishful thinking. Mr. Alexander is a good Christian but he is also a good patriot, albeit a pacifist ; his humanitarian sympathies are balanced by his loyalty to his own nation at war. He has neither the spiritual sensibility of an Andrews nor the political judgment of a William Phillips or a Louis Fischer. This is not to imply that he is an imperialist or that he is not a sincere friend of India. He undoubtedly is a true and tried friend but he is at the same time a true and loyal Englishman, which combination of virtues has played havoc with his political judgment. Moreover, his Christian charity seems to extend to all politics and personalities—except of course to the Axis. The Indian claim to independence is just, but the Congress demand for it was a little unreasonable ; the British obstinacy is deplorable but the Viceroy's firmness was admirable. Gandhiji and Lord Linlithgow were almost equally good men and well-wishers of the Indian people, if only they could have understood each other. Presumably if either of them had had the wisdom and tolerance of Mr. Alexander, the Indian tragedy could have been averted. Jinnah, Jawaharlal, Suhrawardy, Nazim-ud-Din, Dr. Ambedkar, even M. N. Roy, seem all excellent patriots, if only the Indian politics were free from the poison of mutual suspicion ! The author, however, has not lost all hope. For Lord Wavell is there. If only he and Gandhi learn to understand each other, all may yet be well. How nice and simple it all seems, and how truly Christian !

K. K.

*STRANGERS IN INDIA* : By Penderel Moon. Faber and Faber Ltd., London.

JUST as we were frankly disappointed with Mr. Horace Alexander's book reviewed above, because we expected a deeper understanding and a better sense of values from one whom we look upon as a friend of humanity rather than as an Englishman, in the same way Mr. Moon's book comes as a pleasant surprise, for the simple reason that we expected nothing but prejudice, superciliousness and diehardism from an ex-member of the Indian Civil Service. But Mr. Moon was

different from his colleagues in the ruling caste inasmuch as he found it necessary to resign from the Indian Civil Service. A sensitive, inquiring mind, a refreshing candour which sometimes borders on the cynical, a lack of self-righteous pomposity mark the pages of this book and are in themselves an explanation why the author found it difficult to pull on as a mere clog in the vast soulless machine called the British administration in India. The author does not profess any special love for the Indian people or admiration of their culture ; nor does he concern himself much with the moral issues involved in the Indian claim of independence. It is as an Englishman that he looks at the problem and it is as an Englishman that he feels at once proud of the past achievement of his people and ashamed of the present mess they seem to be making.

The author follows the novel and interesting plan of dramatising what are obviously his own experiences in the career of a young Englishman called Greenlane, who sets sail for India as a civilian officer with the best of intentions and in the true public school spirit of helping to bring the blessings of British rule to "the dumb millions of India." The very first thing that strikes him on arrival is the abject poverty of the people in the villages and he wonders if the people in India, after a century and half of British rule, are not poorer today than they were at the death of Akbar. But the moment he puts this question to his senior colleagues he finds to his consternation that he has said something which he should never have even admitted to his consciousness. He recalls the words of an India Office official : "We have £1,000 million capital in India. We remain in India to safeguard it, not to teach them how to govern themselves." After a brief but interesting career in the Punjab, he comes to the conclusion that English Officers can only work in India either as mercenaries or in the spirit of missionaries ; and since he cannot fit himself in either of these categories, he resigns and quits.

What puzzles the author most is that if the British did not mean to grant India independence in the end, then why did they set up the sham self-governing institutions which have only introduced corruption and bribery in the administration. If, on the other hand, the British were honest about their intentions, then why did they not follow the advice of men like Elphinstone, Munro and Metcalfe and admit Indians from the very beginning to the highest posts in the civil and military administration of their country so as to facilitate the transition to self-government in the only way in which it could have been done. Why did they, on the one hand, foster by their education policy the growth of political consciousness in the middle classes, and on the other hand poison the very fruits of it by their policy of "divide and rule" ?

"Foreign conquerors," the author quotes Thomas Munro writing to the Governor-General in 1817, "have treated the natives with violence, and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we : none have stigmatized the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to be

not only ungenerous, but impolitic, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion ... the strength of the British Government enables it to put down every rebellion, to repel every foreign invasion, and to give to its subjects a degree of protection which those of no Native power enjoy. Its laws and institutions also afford them a security from domestic oppression, unknown in those states ; but these advantages are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable. The Natives of the British provinces may, without fear, pursue their different occupations ... and enjoy the fruits of their labour in tranquillity ; but none of them can aspire to anything beyond this mere animal state of thriving in peace ... none of them can look forward to any share in the legislation or civil or military government of their country .... The effect of this state of things is observable in all the British provinces, whose inhabitants are certainly the most abject race in India .... The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms, would be, in place of raising, to debase the whole people."

The author's remarks on the partition of India into two or more States are pertinent and worth quoting. "On altogether more general grounds partition is to be deprecated. Geographically India is a unity ; and, though seldom united politically, political unity was for centuries a vague ideal, supported by a sense of underlying cultural and spiritual unity. That ideal has been realized ; its realization has been the outstanding achievement of British rule. To throw over that achievement now by a deliberate act of partition would be a lamentable retrogression wholly at variance with the real needs of the modern world and fraught with grave dangers. For to partition India may well be the prelude to breaking India in pieces. In a country so full of division and diversities loss of political unity may swiftly lead to hopeless fragmentation .... Some say that partition is impossible. Others that it is inevitable. But it is neither. It is only undesirable."

The author's estimate of the so-called Indian Communists is interesting. When a communist, Salig Ram, boasts to a high English civilian, Mr. Lightfoot, about the role of his party in helping the war effort, the latter snubs him thus : "There you go again, Salig Ram, drugging yourself with meaningless phrases and talking complete nonsense. A People's War indeed ! What on earth can the illiterate peasants of India understand about a People's War ? To the Russian peasant this may be a People's War. At any rate he's fighting for his hearth and home which is something he has done before and can understand .... Recruitment is determined by quite other factors than your propaganda ; nor, if you take India as a whole, can you say that recruits are coming in fast .... Recruitment is mainly determined by economic factors. No doubt there are a few small areas where the people regard soldiering as a profession. They've been serving in the Indian army for nearly a century, and when opportunity occurs, they join up in large numbers because that's their trade. They're hereditary soldiers, and damned fine soldiers too—well disciplined in peace and brave in war .... But barring

these, your other recruits join the army not to fight Hitler, to help Russia, to defend India, or to protect their homes, but simply to make a livelihood .... In the prosperous parts of the country down in the canal colonies for instance, you simply can't get recruits. The people are too well off .... There are regular agents in the business. They purchase potential recruits, say, in this district, for eight or ten rupees a head, rail them down to the colonies, and sell them there for forty or fifty rupees. Meanwhile Mr. Amery talks in the House of Commons of two million 'volunteers' and you communists prattle about a People's War. Bah ! It makes me sick !"

The conversation takes place on the ninth of August 1942. Mr. Lightfoot goes on to taunt the communist. "... you, Salig Ram, having told me that Gandhi had to be arrested, will be making speeches and passing resolutions demanding his release. What people you are !"

"Sir, we have to say these things, or no one would care to listen to us."

"Perhaps that's because you're not worth listening to."

We hope this excellent book will be widely read in England and America and in India as well. Though written by an Englishman and from the point of view of an Englishman, it is written by an honest Englishman and shows English character in a light which is unfortunately becoming uncommon these days. It has been said that power always corrupts and that nowhere does it corrupt more than in India. It therefore does credit to an Englishman that having shared this power he managed to escape its infection.

K. K.

*GIVE DEMOCRACY A CHANCE* : By "Cactus."

Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay. Price : Re. 1/12/-

THE major part of this booklet consists of a succinct summary of the story of world diplomacy during the period between the two world wars. It is an able analysis of the psychology underlying international relations, the worth of which is enhanced by the author's attempt to show the economic and commercial motives lying behind political actions of the Great Powers on the international chessboard. As a result of such an analysis the author is able to show that the fundamental political categories are not on the one side Democracy and Parliamentarianism and on the other Dictatorship and Absolutism, as such distinctions are only apparent. The fundamental distinctions are those between Imperialism and Socialism or privilege and living by owning on the one hand and responsibility and living by working on the other. So far the analysis is understandable. But as the reader approaches the end of the book he wonders why the caption "Give Democracy a Chance". The hollowness of the *so-called democracies* has been shown by the author himself and Soviet Russia ( whose socialistic civilization he admires ) is by his own admission a *dictatorship*, whose rigours, he only hopes, will be relaxed in future.

Perhaps the transformation of a *dictatorial socialistic state* ( like Russia ) to a *democratic socialistic state* is considered such a natural and simple thing by the author that he thinks that asking to "Give Democracy a Chance" tantamounts to advocating the cause of a democratic socialistic state. Of this we are not convinced. For a socialistic society it is neither easy nor natural to work within the framework of a parliamentary democracy because any type of socialism is unthinkable without an *enlightened leadership* and an enlightened leadership is not obtainable in the polling booths. For a truly People's State newer bases are to be sought for about which the author gives no intimation,—instead he appeals to the "democracies" for guidance and thereby falls into the same error of mistaking them for "democracies in reality" in which, according to him, "the man in the street" often fell.

K. P. Mukherji.

*A PLAN FOR BRITAIN* :—A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society by G. D. H. Cole, Aneurin Bevan, Jim Griffiths, F. Easterbrook, Sir William Beveridge, Harold J. Laski.  
Vora & Co., Bombay. Price Rs. 2/-.

THIS booklet contains six articles relating to different aspects of Planning in Britain almost all of which emphasise the revolutionary nature of this war and its ideals. Most of them further emphasise that if attempts are not made to realise this now, the achievements of this war will be nothing better than the perpetuation of the old order of privilege and vested interest which engendered the war. A note of warning has therefore been raised by some of the essayists against the danger of a resurrection of Tory reaction in the post-war period in Britain, and the danger, according to them, is to be averted by Planning, specially by the public control of credit and investment, key and mother industries, basic education, mobility of labour, workers' partnership in industrial organisation and management.

In the typical Fabian way the writers have coquetted with revolutionary ideals within the framework of a plutocratic State. True, Prof. Laski and Sir William Beveridge hint at the necessity of change in the governmental machinery about the nature of which some intimation is given and which Prof. Laski even admits must be revolutionary in nature, if the "freedom of the few" is to be replaced by the "freedom of the many"; yet the suggestions made are so tame and in practice found to be so ineffectual that those who are apt to act according to them are sure to miss the "supreme historical moment" like the one which, according to the learned professor, Lenin utilised "to inaugurate a socialist Civilisation." It is, however, refreshing to note the necessity of an international outlook in Planning emphasised by Mr. Easterbrook and Prof. Laski and

the latter's plea for the dawning of "the century of the common man" is stimulating. The booklet is a product of the peculiar British habit of meandering within the labyrinths of their own traditional past even when thinking under the influence of a revolutionary temper or the inspiration of a moral fervour. A more suitable title would have been— "Britain groping for a Plan."

K. P. Mukerji.

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- The Problem of Hindustani* : By Tara Chand (Indian Periodicals Ltd., Allahabad).



Tea,

thou soft, thou sober, sage  
and venerable liquid!

(The Lady's Last Stake. Act. I.)

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Sabari awaiting Ramchandra in youth

By Nandalal Bose



# GANDHI THE MAN

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

[ THIS beautiful estimate of Gandhi—the Man was originally written in January 1938. It was first published in the *Sunday Statesman*, ( Feb. 13, 1938 ). By courtesy of its editor we are happy to republish it on the occasion of the Mahatma's 75th birthday. No tribute could be more fitting than this to the great Master of Action by a great Master of Thought and Word.—Ed. ]

AFTER my return to India from some months' touring in the West, I found the whole country convulsed with the expectation of an immediate independence—Gandhiji had promised Swaraj in one year—by the help of some process that was obviously narrow in its scope and external in its observance.

Such an assurance, coming from a great personality, produced a frenzy of hope even in those who were ordinarily sober in their calculation of worldly benefits ; and they angrily argued with me that in this particular case it was not a question of logic, but of a spiritual phenomenon that had a mysterious influence and miraculous power of prescience. This had the effect of producing a strong doubt in my mind about Mahatmaji's wisdom in the path he chose for attaining a great end through satisfying an inherent weakness in our character which has been responsible for the age-long futility of our political life.

We who often glorify our tendency to ignore reason, installing in its place blind faith, valuing it as spiritual, are ever paying for its cost with the obscuration of our mind and destiny. I blamed Mahatmaji for exploiting this irrational force of credulity in our people, which might have had a quick result in a superstructure, while sapping the foundation. Thus began my estimate of Mahatmaji, as the guide of our nation, and it is fortunate for me that it did not end there.

Gandhiji, like all dynamic personalities, needed a vast medium for the proper and harmonious expression of his creative will. This medium he developed for himself, when he assumed the tremendous responsibility of leading the whole country into freedom through countless social ditches and fences and unlimited dullness of barren politics. This endeavour has enriched and mellowed his personality and revealed what was truly significant in his genius. I have since learnt to understand him, as I would understand an artist, not by the theories and fantasies of the creed he may profess, but by that expression in his practice which gives evidence to the uniqueness

of his mind. In that only true perspective, as I watch him, I am amazed at the effectiveness of his humanity.

An ascetic himself, he does not frown on the joys of others, but works for the enlivening of their existence day and night. He exalts poverty in his own life, but no man in India has striven more assiduously than he for the material welfare of his people. A reformer with the zeal of a revolutionary, he imposes severe restraints on the very passions he provokes. Something of an idolator and also an iconoclast, he leaves the old gods in their dusty niches of sanctity and simply lures the old worship to better and more humane purposes. Professing his adherence to the caste system, he launches his firmest attack against it where it keeps its strongest guards, and yet he has hardly suffered from popular disapprobation as would have been the case with a lesser man who would have much less power to be effective in his efforts.

He condemns sexual life as inconsistent with the moral progress of man, and has a horror of sex as great as that of the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but, unlike Tolstoy, he betrays no abhorrence of the sex that tempts his kind. In fact, his tenderness for woman is one of the noblest and most consistent traits of his character, and he counts among the women of his country some of his best and truest comrades in the great movement he is leading.

He advises his followers to hate evil without hating the evil-doer. It sounds an impossible precept, but he has made it as true as it can be made in his own life. I had once occasion to be present at an interview he gave to a certain prominent politician who had been denounced by the official Congress party as a deserter. Any other Congress leader would have assumed a repelling attitude, but Gandhiji was all graciousness and listened to him with patience and sympathy, without once giving him occasion to feel small. Here, I said to myself, is a truly great man, for he is greater than the party he belongs to, greater even than the creed he professes.

This, then, seems to me to be the significant fact about Gandhiji. Great as he is as a politician, as an organizer, as a leader of men, as a moral reformer, he is greater than all these as a man, because none of these aspects and activities limits his humanity. They are rather inspired and sustained by it. Though an incorrigible idealist and given to referring all conduct to certain pet formulae of his own, he is essentially a lover of men and not of mere ideas ; which makes

him so cautious and conservative in his revolutionary schemes. If he proposes an experiment for society, he must first subject himself to its ordeal. If he calls for a sacrifice, he must first pay its price himself. While many Socialists wait for all to be deprived of their privileges before they would part with theirs, this man first renounces before he ventures to make any claims on the renunciation of others.

There are patriots in India, as indeed among all peoples, who have sacrificed for their country as much as Gandhiji has done, and some who have had to suffer much worse penalties than he has ever had to endure : even as in the religious sphere, there are ascetics in this country, compared to the rigours of whose practices Gandhiji's life is one of comparative ease. But these patriots are mere patriots and nothing more ; and these ascetics are mere spiritual athletes, limited as men by their very virtues ; while this man seems greater than his virtues, great as they are.

Perhaps none of the reforms with which his name is associated was originally his in conception. They have almost all been proposed and preached by his predecessors or contemporaries. Long before the Congress adopted them, I had myself preached and written about the necessity of a constructive programme of rural reconstruction in India ; of handicrafts as an essential element in the education of our children ; of the absolute necessity of ridding Hinduism of the nightmare of untouchability. Nevertheless, it remains true, that they have never had the same energizing power in them as when he took them up ; for now they are quickened by the great life-force of the complete man who is absolutely one with his ideas, whose visions perfectly blend with his whole being.

His emphasis on the truth and purity of the means, from which he has evolved his creed of non-violence, is but another aspect of his deep and insistent humanity ; for it insists that men in their fight for their claims must only so assert their rights, whether as individuals or as groups, as never to violate their fundamental obligation to humanity, which is to respect life. To say that, because existing rights and privileges of certain classes were originally won and are still maintained by violence, they can only be destroyed by violence, is to create an unending circle of viciousness ; for there will always be men with some grievance, fancied or real, against the prevailing order of society, who will claim the same immunity from moral obligation and the right to wade to their goal through slaughter.

of his mind. In that only true perspective, as I watch him, I am amazed at the effectiveness of his humanity.

An ascetic himself, he does not frown on the joys of others, but works for the enlivening of their existence day and night. He exalts poverty in his own life, but no man in India has striven more assiduously than he for the material welfare of his people. A reformer with the zeal of a revolutionary, he imposes severe restraints on the very passions he provokes. Something of an idolator and also an iconoclast, he leaves the old gods in their dusty niches of sanctity and simply lures the old worship to better and more humane purposes. Professing his adherence to the caste system, he launches his firmest attack against it where it keeps its strongest guards, and yet he has hardly suffered from popular disapprobation as would have been the case with a lesser man who would have much less power to be effective in his efforts.

He condemns sexual life as inconsistent with the moral progress of man, and has a horror of sex as great as that of the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but, unlike Tolstoy, he betrays no abhorrence of the sex that tempts his kind. In fact, his tenderness for woman is one of the noblest and most consistent traits of his character, and he counts among the women of his country some of his best and truest comrades in the great movement he is leading.

He advises his followers to hate evil without hating the evil-doer. It sounds an impossible precept, but he has made it as true as it can be made in his own life. I had once occasion to be present at an interview he gave to a certain prominent politician who had been denounced by the official Congress party as a deserter. Any other Congress leader would have assumed a repelling attitude, but Gandhiji was all graciousness and listened to him with patience and sympathy, without once giving him occasion to feel small. Here, I said to myself, is a truly great man, for he is greater than the party he belongs to, greater even than the creed he professes.

This, then, seems to me to be the significant fact about Gandhiji. Great as he is as a politician, as an organizer, as a leader of men, as a moral reformer, he is greater than all these as a man, because none of these aspects and activities limits his humanity. They are rather inspired and sustained by it. Though an incorrigible idealist and given to referring all conduct to certain pet formulae of his own, he is essentially a lover of men and not of mere ideas ; which makes

him so cautious and conservative in his revolutionary schemes. If he proposes an experiment for society, he must first subject himself to its ordeal. If he calls for a sacrifice, he must first pay its price himself. While many Socialists wait for all to be deprived of their privileges before they would part with theirs, this man first renounces before he ventures to make any claims on the renunciation of others.

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Somewhere the circle has to be broken, and Gandhiji wants his country to win the glory of first breaking it.

Perhaps he will not succeed. Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come.

## THIS GREATEST CHRISTIAN

By ROMAIN ROLLAND

[ THIS is a reply by Romain Rolland to the criticism of his famous book (*Mahatma Gandhi* : Romain Rolland. Librairie Stock, 1924. Indian edition in English—Ganesan. ) by a French missionary, M. Gaston V. Rosselet. A copy of it, written in the author's hand, was sent to Mr. C. F. Andrews and is kept in the archives of the Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan. The English translation is by Sm. Indira Devi Chaudhurani. We cannot say if this is the complete reply or only an extract from the same.—Ed. ]

I SIMPLY wanted to make known to Europe a great spiritual movement and a great man, about whom no European missionary has adequately spoken to us, if I am not mistaken ( since the beautiful book, now forgotten, written by Joseph J. Doke, in Transvaal, in 1909 )\*—although it was their duty to have done so, long ago. And in my turn, I ask M. Rosselet why these Christians have passed over in silence the work of this greatest Christian—although he was one only in spirit, and not by baptism ?

My book never had any pretension of being a representation of all the religious and social movements of modern India ; and I had no occasion to speak in it of the Y. M. C. A. (Young Men's Christian Associations ), which are powerful enough to speak for themselves, and do not neglect to do so. Besides, M. Paul is worthy of all respect, and also deserves a special study. But everything in its own time. Possibly I may continue the series of these Indian studies.

My book has been revised by several Indian friends, and by one of the principal leaders of the Swaraj Party : Lajpat Rai. They

\* Joseph J. Doke : *M. K. Gandhi, An Indian Patriot in South Africa*. With an introduction by Lord Ampthill. 1909, London.

consider it to be a true picture on the whole. They have pointed out to me some mistakes in details, like the one (justly mentioned by M. Rosselet) which refers to the partial failure of the abandonment of titles and honorific functions by order of the Non-Co-operation Committee. The corrections they have indicated to me will be made in the following editions. These will slightly alter my text, but not my conclusions.

For the rest, it appears that M. Rosselet has constituted himself a champion of the British Government. I shall not follow him on this ground. I should have too much to say, and I haven't the time to-day. That which is deferred, is not lost.

I shall answer only two or three points :

I have spoken at length of the bonfire (*auto-da-fé*) of foreign cloth, and I fail to understand why M. Rosselet tries to make out that I have passed it over in silence. I have given ample space (pp. 83-85 of the French edition) to the sorrowful objurgations of C. F. Andrews, and (pp. 112-140, especially p. 139) to the opposition between Tagore and Gandhi. I add my own regrets to those of Andrews.

The spinning wheel appears to M. Rosselet to be an economic means worthy of ridicule. It might have been so, had Gandhi extolled it as the only means of livelihood for the Indian villager. Gandhi has never said anything of the kind. He has said that the spinning wheel would enable villagers to add a little to their meagre subsistence, and to economise on their clothing. In the issue of *Young India* of the 22nd Jan. 1925, there is an account of a popular mass meeting at Vidchi. An old man of sixty tells Gandhi that he now spins after a hard day's work in the fields, not because of faith in him, but because : "I spin for myself. I produce my own yarn. I weave my own clothes and those of my family. Thus I put by a little ...." The spinning wheel as a cottage industry existed almost everywhere in India, before the advent of the British. The English have destroyed it. Gandhi has re-established it. It is not a medieval return to a forgotten industry, fallen into disuse. It is a natural, practical and immediate means of reducing expenses, whilst at the same time striking at the foreign industries which have come to drain from India the money that is spent in foreign parts. For this is one of the biggest grievances of India against England : that, until she came, all the conquerors who succeeded each other on the soil of India, after their

depredations were over, established themselves in the country, became Indians, and spent in the land the wealth extorted from it ; so that one generation of men perhaps suffered but India itself remained uninjured ; the English conquest, on the other hand, makes England live upon India and undermines it.

M. Rosselet speaks of the Co-operatives created by the Government. They exist. But I have consulted my Indian friends. All independent-minded Indians ( and even Englishmen as well-informed as the Director of the School of Agriculture at Sriniketan,—adjoining Santiniketan )\*—agree in saying that these Co-operative Societies are not based on a real spirit of mutual assistance, and that if the Government were to withdraw their pecuniary aid from them, they would disappear immediately.

Finally, that the British Government “has given its support to every attempt at fighting alcoholism” will no doubt very much astonish my Indian friends ; and I invite them to make a reply. But I do not need to wait for their reply in order to know that at this very moment the British Government is imposing upon India the poison of opium, on the hypocritical pretext that it is carrying out the wish of the Indian people. And it shuts its ears to their indignant protests ; but it cannot succeed in preventing our hearing them ; they express themselves violently in the Indian press and even in the liberal papers of England, like the *Manchester Guardian*.

February, 1925.

Romain Rolland.

P. S. Let me add that if European readers want to follow the Gandhist movement for themselves, they should read the weekly journal *Young India*, of which I am giving the address.

I may add that the policy of Khaddar has also for Gandhi the value of a tactical experiment. As he has written in a recent article, he is teaching his undisciplined countrymen obedience to an order of mobilisation which is peaceful but not ineffective ; the violence of the attacks which come from the British side show that he has hit the mark.

## A LETTER TO C. F. ANDREWS

*Villa Olga, Villeneuve (Vaud),  
Switzerland. November 17, 24.*

Dear Mr. Andrews,

I am glad to be able to send you the translations of your article on Gandhi published in a French review and a German-Swiss newspaper widely read : *Die Neue Züricher Zeitung*. (I am sending you by the same mail a postal order for 80 Swiss francs paid by the *Neue Züricher* ).

It is a great joy to us to receive your letters and to get in touch, thanks to you, with the Mahatma. I read also regularly *Young India* and follow with eager interest all that is going on now in India. The present state of affairs and the uncompromising attitudes of the new Government in England<sup>1</sup> seems very disquieting. But what a wonderful achievement the Unity Conference<sup>2</sup> and the fraternal spirit between Hindu, Moslem and Christian leaders ! Even if no worldly success does follow, this unity of soul before all-embracing God, of which the moving ceremony when Gandhi broke his fast was a symbol, is the greatest victory of our age.

We could not see Tagore before he left for South America ; but fortunately he got in time all the necessary information. We hope he will be able to come to us on his way back. When shall we see you here ?

Mr. Youl's sudden death was a great shock to us. He was a noble fighter and he fought to the end. But the end came too soon,—he had still so much to do ! We cannot forget it was through him we met you in London. It was the first and last time we saw him.

My brother and I send you, dear Mr. Andrews, *nos meilleures amitiés*, as we say in France.<sup>8</sup>

Yours most sincerely,  
Madeleine Rolland

1 *New Government in England* : Ramsay Macdonald's first Labour Government.

2 *Unity Conference* : In Sept. 1924 Mahatma Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days in Delhi as a penance for the Hindu-Muslim riots which had broken out over the country during the spring and summer of that year. "My penance," he wrote, "is the prayer of a bleeding heart for forgiveness of sins unwillingly committed." A Unity Conference was summoned in Delhi in which prominent Hindus, Muslims and Christians, Indians and Europeans, of every shade of political opinion took part to find ways and means of achieving communal harmony in India.

8 *Nos meilleures amitiés* : Our best regards.

## TWO POEMS

By MECS-LASZLO

[ MECS-LASZLO, who is a monk by choice, is considered by his countrymen as one of the greatest among the living poets of Hungary. These two poems of his have been rendered into English by Kanti and Eta Ghosh, the latter, a Hungarian by birth. ]

### THE METEOR

A FRAGMENT torn  
From an age-old shining orb,  
Revolving round and round  
What sphere I knew not,  
Sense of Time was nought,  
And memory none,

Till I touched this earth  
And smelt its atmosphere.  
A messenger from the world above,  
Glowing, resplendent,  
I breathed out my message brief  
In the language of Light,  
And then shrinking, so fated,  
I fell, like a molten image,  
Unrecognisable. A lump of ore.

Now come they  
The scientists with their shining toys,  
To declare—  
'Tis not iron, nor brass, nor bronze, nor gold.  
Neither foundry-made, nor vulcan-born,  
'Tis full of mystery like Life itself.  
The Unknown Spirit alone may hold  
Such ore in its mystic-womb.

I am a fragment  
Of the eternal-shining mystery.  
My message given  
In Light-signals yet unknown on earth—  
I die in silence.

## THE MIRROR

THE TRAIN was gathering speed  
And our coupé was narrow.  
The child wanted to play.  
Spring brings awakening to the waterfall  
And it would fain play the rivulet.  
Her ennui gone, the child must play.  
The coupé was narrow.

The child searched for a mirror. . . .  
Wherein to see her own reflection.  
She sought for it in her mother's eyes  
Weary and sad.  
She smiled and waited.  
The smile-back was hazy : the mirror clouded.

Her gaze wandered in search. . . .  
The banker sat in front in heavy repose,  
His eyes glued to the Exchange news.  
They never smiled.  
She sought for her mirror and found none.

The child was searching for a mirror. . . .  
She smiled to the lovers in the corner,  
Smiled and waited.  
Their smile mirrored back each other's love,  
Not the child's.  
The mirror was frosted, mist-laden with desire.

Her gaze wandered in search. . . .  
The guard went on punching tickets,  
Red-cheeked, peak-capped, shabby and grey.  
She smiled and waited.  
His ferret-eyes were busy : no mirror there.

Then she smiled to me  
And she had not to wait : I smiled back.  
My eyes mirrored hers.  
The moon above has found herself  
Cradled in the lake below.

Somewhere the angels sang the lullaby.  
In me she's found her mirror  
Wherein she sees her own reflection.  
I've fought my fight with dualities :  
Love, hate ; good, bad ; hope and fear.  
I am free.  
Not oppressed with time, nor wealth,  
Nor afraid of penury—  
My soul shines clear,  
My mirror is clean.

And my clean mirror smiles back  
To flowers and thorns, to wolves and lambs,  
To rainbows and to thunder-storms,  
To laurels and to the Cross ;  
Smiles back to Satan,  
And to God.

My eyes mirrored hers.



## SCIENCE AND HUMANISM

By DR. SAROJ K. DAS

IN the *Preface* to his *Magna Instauratio* ("the Great Reconstruction") Sir Francis Bacon may be said to have sounded, as early as the first quarter of the 17th century, the clarion call of Science in the service of Man, as the keynote of modern civilisation. As he proclaimed therein, knowledge is power and no mere argument or ornament; "not an opinion to be held . . . but a work to be done; and I . . . am labouring to lay the foundation not of any sect or doctrine, but of utility and power." With a prophetic presentiment, as it were, Bacon set about the task of planning this great Reconstruction—that airy nothing with which the air is thick now-a-days—and set down, more or less in the manner of a doctrinaire, his own "Plan of Work", which was to be, first of all, writing some *Introductory Treatises*, tracing the stagnation of philosophy to the lingering influence of the old and decadent methods of study and mapping out in outlines the course of a new beginning. Secondly, he would make new *Classification of the Sciences*, assigning to them their respective fields and listing the unsolved problems in each. Thirdly, he would prescribe his new method or organon for the *Interpretation of Nature*. Fourthly, there was to be the actual application of this method to natural science and investigation of the *Phenomena of Nature*. Fifthly, he would set forth the *Ladder of the Intellect* whereby his predecessors in the field had moved up to truths, based hitherto on mediaeval formalism. Sixthly, he would attempt certain *Anticipations* of scientific results which would follow from the use of his method. As the seventh and the last, there was to be a *Second* or Applied *Philosophy*, wherein would be found the crown and consummation of the budding sciences, of which he claimed to be the prophet and preacher.

This striking design, along with the seven lamps of its architecture, has been usually assessed as a case of unfulfilled promise. But the verdict of history is written across the face of the last three centuries—with all its trials and experiments, successes and failures—and it represents the Baconian plan of work as being on the way to fulfilment in more ways than one. Proudly defiant at the discredit and discomfiture he had met at the hands of his contemporaries, Francis



Bacon furnished in his will his own epitaph in these characteristic words : "I bequeath my soul to God. . . . My body to be buried obscurely. My name to the next ages and to foreign nations." We have reasons to believe that this will has been executed to the letter. When all is said and done, the fact remains that Francis Bacon will go down in history as the seminal and shaping force of modern science in its ceaseless advance along the corridor of time. He may not have been admitted into a glorious corner in the building dedicated to the memory of epoch-makers in Science, but his is the abiding glory to serve as the foundation which, for that very reason, is never seen in the building itself ! Critically speaking, he had the faults of his greatness ; in other words, at once the greatness as well as the weakness of Bacon lay just in his passion for unity, in his ambition to overspread, with the wings of his co-ordinating genius, the sciences, all and sundry. Herein he aspired to be in the honoured company of "the spectators of all time and all existence", championed by Plato, the "man of sublime genius, who took a view of everything as from a lofty rock." Admittedly, it was not for him to effect a right royal entry into the Promised Land of Science, but to him rightfully belongs the credit of being the path-finder who could at least stand on its border and point to its shining tableland in the distance. So much is clearly discernible from Bacon's last work *The New Atlantis*—a book damned to unmerited neglect but hailed by Mr. H. G. Wells as Bacon's "greatest service to science". The theme, pure and simple, is perfect science pressed into the service of social reconstruction—the perfecting of the social order. In Bacon's own words, "The End of our Foundation is the Knowledge of Causes and secret motions of things ; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible." Viewed in its historical affiliations, it recalls Plato who, in his famous dialogue *Timaeus*, had told us of the old legend of Atlantis, the sunken continent in the Western seas. Bacon sought to identify the new America of Columbus and Cabot with this old Atlantis. Now as this *old* Atlantis had been discovered and found inhabited by a vigorous race, but not upto Bacon's standard of scientific efficiency, he drifted in the direction of a *new* Atlantis, an island in the distant Pacific which only Drake and Magellan had traversed, an island distant enough from Europe to give free scope to Utopian imagination. The story begins in the most artfully artless way—in the manner of the historic

tales of Defoe and Swift. We are unobtrusively introduced to "Solomon's House", the home of the island government—which is, to the discerning eye, only the pale reflex of the Houses of Parliament in London, with this difference, however, that there are no insolent "elected persons" and no politicians. The New Atlantis Government is a government of the people, and for the people, by the selected best of the people—a government by technicians, architects, astronomers, geologists, biologists, physicians, chemists, economists, psychologists and philosophers, but not politicians, professional or otherwise. The moral of this dispensation is demonstrably plain: no plan of socio-economic reconstruction is to be staked on the game or gamble of politics. Here it is that we find Bacon in his true colours—if not as a pioneer scientist, at least as the prophet of a Scientific Humanism forestalled by his historic utterance of 1592: "I have taken all knowledge to be my province." No wonder that he should have failed to redeem this pledge. Greater still in his achievement, in the propagation of widespread influence, albeit indirect and impersonal, Bacon may legitimately claim, as Macaulay observed, to have "moved the intellects which moved the world." This is a perfectly balanced estimate, and it would be unfair to paint, as is sometimes done, his Scientific Humanism as sordid utilitarianism. For, unto the last, Bacon desired Science to be used, not as "a courtesan for pleasure" but "as a spouse for generation, fruit and comfort."

This Baconian devotion to Science did bear fruit within a century. Although the New Atlantis did not immediately materialise, it hastened the advent of a New world, signalled by the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, which marks the beginning of a new epoch of civilisation. So far as England is concerned, it strictly serves as a dividing-line. To quote Prof. Stanley Jevons, "the history of British industry and trade may be divided into two periods, backward from about the middle of the eighteenth century to the earliest times, and forward to the present and the future." Incidentally, it is to be noted that the Industrial Revolution, born of science still in the making, was the inspirer of Science in return—the two standing in the relation of reciprocal service and support. It was an age when Newton and Herschel had brought the message of stars to contemporary Europe, Boyle and Davy had opened the treasures of chemistry, Faraday was making discoveries of a far-

reaching character in electricity, while Rumford and Joule were demonstrating the transformability and equivalence of force and the conservation of energy. Thus the priority of mathematics and mechanics in the development of modern science, and the reciprocal stimulation of industry and physics under the common pressure of growing needs, gave to speculation a materialistic impulse and a mechanical bias, which reached its culminating point in the system of Herbert Spencer. In point of fact, Herbert Spencer was the intellectual reflex of the industrialism of his age.

Anyway it is undeniable that with the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, wealth poured into Western Europe ; and as wealth multiplied, the hope of heaven came to be replaced by the craze for progress. What facilitated further this shifting of emphasis was the Copernican revelation of the astronomic unimportance of the earth ; and this, by a natural reaction, gave rise to compensatory faith in an earthly paradise. Accordingly, with a pre-established harmony, as it were, Thomas Campanella, Thomas More, and Francis Bacon produced Utopias, each in his own way, and announced the dawn of a new era of universal happiness. Thus, in quick succession trade made cities, cities built universities, universities patronised science, science promoted industry, and industry spelled progress. But is there any standard measure of progress ? The present crisis in civilisation is a forceful challenge to this happy delusion of progress. Although the answer may not be forthcoming, the stern logic of facts points to the inevitable conclusion. True it is that industry gives wealth, but is wealth a synonym for well-being ? Industry gathers a vast number of taxable population into a little space, finances imperialistic aggressions and aspires after political domination, but does it make for civilisation ? Industry exalts quantity and number at the expense of quality and artistry ; once every industry was an art, now every art is an industry ; once men, employed in manufacture, were known as handicraftsmen, now they are "hands". Does it bespeak progress in civilisation ? Decidedly not. It is commerce rather than industry that has produced the glorious epochs of European civilisation. And what explains this difference is the factor of organisation which is foreshadowed, however imperfectly, in Bacon's *Magna Instauratio*. We have yet to learn the lesson of organisation in every department of human productive endeavour and in the production of national

wealth—which can only be achieved under the controlling lead of science, on national as well as international lines .

On a broad survey of the entire sphere of activities that constitute human civilisation and culture, it is hard to resist the conviction that “the history of civilisation itself is the history of its secularization.” Let us not thereby convert a judgement of fact into a judgement of value. With dispassionate dialectic Karl Marx divides the march of human history into the hunting and pastoral stage, the agricultural and handicraft stage, the industrial and machine stage. The determining factors here are not political but economic : they are not the battle of Marathon, or the assassination of Caesar, the French Revolution, but they are the Agricultural Revolution, or the passage from hunting to ploughing, and the Industrial Revolution or the transition from domestic industry to factory production. Although of parenthetic importance in this context, the cultural bearing of Industrial Revolution, which has done wonders with mechanism and hypnotised the modern mind into the Worship of Numbers, is disconcerting in the extreme. It is heartening to note, however, that Tagore has wielded his mighty pen in his “Mukta-dhārā” ( The Released Waterfall ) and “Rakta-Karabi” ( The Red Oleanders ) against the menace of growing mechanisation of Man.

As we take stock of the service of Science to Man, we are made painfully conscious of the fact that “because in these days our means and instruments have multiplied beyond our interpretation and synthesis of ideals and ends, our life is full of sound and fury signifying nothing.” Truly does Will Durant, a gifted American writer of our time, observe : “Science tells us how to heal and how to kill ; it reduces the death-rate in retail and then kills us wholesale in war ; but only wisdom . . . can tell us when to heal and when to kill. . . . Science without philosophy, facts without perspective and valuation, cannot save us from havoc and despair. Science gives us knowledge, but only philosophy can give us wisdom.” Knowledge is power indeed, but only wisdom is liberty. Seized by this Great Madness of power-intoxicated knowledge, we plunge into the co-operative suicide of war, and can only be saved by wisdom which is but the *good* of knowledge—the way in which knowledge is used. It is a thousand times better, therefore, to be Socrates in prison than Caliban on the throne.

# A WEARY PILGRIM

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A WEARY pilgrim I travel  
    across the haunts of iron-limbed monsters,  
shrieking and stinking  
    befouling the earth and sky,  
devouring life to change it  
    into piles of deadly pride.

Intricate is the path,  
    unfriendly the night,  
the guarded gates barred by snarling suspicion,  
    that growls at the shadows of strangers seeking home.

Send thy welcome signal across the dark,  
    O Rising Sun !  
Open the golden gate at the ancient shrine of the East,  
    where dwells the spirit of Man,  
great as the grass that blesses the lowly dust,  
    meek as the mountain under stars.

[ From a manuscript of the poet in the possession of Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan. The original has no title. ]



Kunala and Kanchanmala

After the original pencil-sketch

By Nandalal Bose



# MAN AND MEANS

By LILA RAY

MAN and man's world are the work of his hands. The human hand is an organ of great pliancy and manipulative power. Yet as there is little men can do with their bare hands they use them first to make tools and then to do what they want to do by means of tools. Tools have been used as an index to human evolution because they show us how man has functioned effectively in any particular configuration of circumstances and so provide the ground plan for specific culture. Cultural patterns and periods generally have been classified according to their tools.

Man works with tools. Work is a dual process comprising a psychic as well as a material procedure. The product of a given material process is the precipitate of a creative psychic process and the precipitant is the tool. Human understanding crystallizes around the tool. Dr. Maria Montessori has called it "a means of auto-experience which evolves man" and explains its function more fully thus ; "In each personality we must recognise two parts : one is the individual, natural, spontaneous activity by means of which elements may be taken from the environment wherewith the personality may be elaborated internally, constructed and augmented, and hence *characterised*; another part is the external instrument with which all this may be done." \* This "external instrument" is the tool. It has also been described as a repository of reason and an extended sense organ. Man being a fusion of mind and means, the tool is as essential a part of him as stripes are of the tiger. It completes him. Nature left him in a more or less incomplete state, apparently expecting him to finish himself. His history is the story of his efforts to do so, ludicrous and pathetic as many of these have been. At various times and places he has decked himself out in feathers, tails, horns and armour, worshipped animals whose natural powers excited his envy and emulation and taken to himself titles that appropriated these qualities. He has tried to be everything but what he is, a weak, slow, naked creature destined not for beast-hood but for manhood. And he has tried to have everything but what is his, an intelligent, meditative mind, a flexible and versatile physique combining the best of the animal and

\* The Advanced Montessori Method.



vegetable worlds in uprightness and mobility, and sensitive hands instead of fore-paws. In spite of aberrations, man has pursued his human destiny and in course of time amassed a quantity of tool equipment which in ingenuity, detachability and variety differs from and surpasses that possessed by any other single living creature.

Tools will thus be seen to be of fundamental importance in the development of the human race. But all devices are not tools. To be a tool a contrivance must perform a dual function even as work is by nature dual. It must accomplish the material purpose intended. To do so it must be designed with reference to the requirements and limitations of the material process involved. A knife must cut, a hook hold. It must also permit of and evoke the free functioning of the creative instinct through which the inner man evolves. And to do so it must be designed with reference to the requirements and limitations of that psychic process.

All hand tools, from the African throwing knife to the microscope, answer to this description as long as they are operated by the freely functioning individual, whether or not that individual is assisted by powers extraneous to himself. Thus the plough does not cease to be a hand tool and become a machine as some economists suggest because it is drawn by the muscular power of oxen, nor does a boat by reason of the wind swelling its sails. The guidance and handling of each remain individual concerns of skill. Similarly an electric iron is none the less a hand tool for being plugged into an electric circuit. Neither are the automobile and aeroplane less tools of locomotion than a rickshaw for having their power supplied by internal combustion engines.

Chisels, levers, spinning wheels, spades, typewriters, pens, sewing machines, telescopes and stethoscopes, eye-glasses and pulleys are other examples of tools. Some of these things are machines. This brings us to the distinction between a tool and a machine. A machine may be a tool. It also may not be. A machine is a tool when it furthers human evolution, that is, when it can be used by the worker to extend his individual powers, supplementing his hand, eye, brain and strength. It is not a tool when it can not be used in this way, when, on the contrary, it makes use of the worker, supplanting his hand, straining his eye, distracting his brain and distorting or sapping his strength. Such machines are to be seen in any mill or factory.

Of the two kinds of machine the second was responsible for

the industrial revolution. If this machine were nothing more than what a machine is usually defined as being, viz., "any apparatus for the application or modification of force to a specific purpose" (*Ency. Brit.*), there would have been no such revolution. Marx realised the inadequacy of this definition and made his own. "The machine that gives rise to the industrial revolution," he writes, "is one which replaces the worker handling a single tool, by a mechanism operating simultaneously a number of identical or similar tools, and driven by a single motive power, whatever the form of the power may be."\*

In the history of implements we see the worker in three roles. Throughout the handicraft period and wherever handicraft is still the dominant form of production he is the user of tools. With the rise of manufacture he becomes a tool. Converted into a link in a chain of interacting implements he is essential as long as the handling of the instrument he holds requires human skill. When the machine described by Marx takes over that function the only thing left for him to do is to valet his successor. He becomes an attendant of the machine.

As the wielder of tools man is the master craftsman. His tools are as personal to him as his five senses, fortifying his natural powers. Moreover he plans, carries out and completes the work in hand. He has to deal with an intact process, a whole experience. What he has to do is socially prescribed to an extent and also more or less how it is to be done. But in the doing he is his own master. Work is not toil. It has all the glory and dignity of natural creative functioning.

The product of the handicraftsman's labour is his. "The absence of any widespread system of delegated employment," writes R. Firth in the *Ency. Brit.* on *Primitive Labour*, "renders the product peculiarly his own and allows scope for the development of the spirit of craftsmanship and delight in the task for its own sake." Delight in a task for its own sake, joyous labour, is *the* indication of internal growth, just as increase in weight is the indication of bodily growth. The thought and imagination of the worker are quickened. He contemplates. In decorating his handiwork he plays mentally with lines and shapes and colours, joining some together and taking others apart, until he obtains the

\* *Das Capital*, Vol I.

combination that satisfies him and suits his purpose. So art grows out of industrial technique, and we have the things of beauty that man has made, Chinese porcelain, Venetian glass, the muslins and silks of India, Hindu and Egyptian temples, Greek sculpture, the cathedrals of Europe and so on. There is, as H. G. Wells has noted, no suggestion of labour troubles during the building of the cathedrals.

There is of course a dark side to the picture. There is limitation, ignorance, superstition. Much of the work is sheer drudgery, relieved though it may be by the pleasures of simple co-operation. But no fissure in the human personality makes it an unsafe foundation for the social superstructure. That foundation is solid and strong in the unity of worker and tool, man and means.

Man as a tool is the toiler of 17th and 18th century Europe of whose elimination H. G. Wells speaks with just pride in his *Work, Wealth and Happiness*. He has ceased to be a "master" and has lost all hope of becoming one. He still handles a tool but no longer has to deal with a whole process. Not only is what he has to do prescribed and how he is to do it but the doing itself is regulated by the requirements of the productive unit of which he is an associated part. The product is no longer his ; it is the factory's. He does what he has to do and no more. His imagination is given no scope. His thought is as restricted as his activity. The growth of his understanding is arrested for he loses his concept of wholeness when he loses contact with a complete work process. Bound for life to the performance of a limited and partial function, the worker, though gaining in speed and execution, loses his versatility, self-reliance and sense of responsibility, becoming as dependent upon his employer for his keep as the ox that draws the plough is on the peasant for his. Work becomes toil. Amusement is substituted for joy and relegated to "spare time". Labour loses the dignity it possesses for the handicraftsman and peasant. Labour troubles are born, for no man willingly submits to the debasement or mutilation of the powers by virtue of which he is a man. Subjugation and compulsion become necessary. Man becomes the tortured, diseased, filthy, short-lived wretch we see in the ghastly factories of the time.

Is there a bright side to the picture ? What were the advantages derived from splitting up the labour process into a series of isolated operations ? According to Marx, they were those of co-operation in general and specialisation in particular. The greater attention bestowed

upon industrial processes had the effect of perfecting tools and working techniques. The handicraftsman's knife, for instance, was a jack-of-all-trades serving many and various purposes, all more or less well. It survives in the pen knife. Dozens of knives replaced it in industry, each of a size, shape and edge suited to a particular job. This simplification and specialisation of tools made possible the invention of the machine.

Man as the servant of the machine is the dispossessed proletarian of large-scale industry. Being entirely eliminated from the work process he no longer even holds a tool. He plans nothing, carries out nothing, finishes nothing. The skill of the human hand with which man has fashioned himself and his world is set aside. "Untouched by hand" becomes a recommendation. Man's powers are forcibly reverted to a state of nature. His activity is restricted to monotonous and repetitive operations for which machines have not yet been invented, such as dipping chocolates or tightening bolts. As machines supplant him he is reduced to "minding" them. Standards of work and conduct become mechanical. Less is heard of the seven cardinal virtues and more of speed, accuracy, punctuality, regularity, keeping to standard, uniformity of output and the ability to keep things moving. Man comes to regard himself and be regarded as a machine, tendering his body and its physiological needs the same reverent submission he gives his economic rival. The worker's life is subdued to a harder monotony and a more stereotyped pleasure than the peasant ever knew. In standardising the occupations, cares and amusements of men, man himself is being standardised. Divorced from his tools, divested of all opportunity to create himself for himself or his environment he is deprived of his individuality. The uniformed automaton is the logical consequence. Man has been dispossessed of his means of growth, of that whereby he has evolved and through which alone he can continue to evolve, normal and natural work.

Yet few will deny that machines represent a great triumph of human ingenuity. They can lighten without eliminating labour. By enabling more work to be done in less time they can increase the wealth of the producer. By shortening the time necessary for earning the worker's livelihood they can give him more leisure to learn and love and serve. By doing away with the technical reasons for the sub-division of labour and the lifelong confinement

of the worker to a limited set of movements they can restore to the worker freedom of function and movement, give back to him the redeeming responsibility of planning, executing and independently completing an intact work process. They can make work again a joyous activity and fertilize instead of uproot individual labouring power. All this is what their inventors fondly dreamed they would do. Marx also pointed out the possibilities opened up thus : " . . . the detail worker who has nothing more to perform than a partial social function shall be superseded by an individual with an all-round development, one for whom various social functions are alternative modes of activity."

The machine defined by Marx, the machine which brought about the industrial revolution, has done and can do, none of these things, being designed for the express purpose of eliminating the variable and incalculable human factor. It is to this machine critics of large scale industry take exception. Mahatma Gandhi writes : "Machinery has its place, it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine" ( *Young India*, 5. 11. 25 ). He opposes the indiscriminate and blind multiplication of machinery without regard for the well-being of the working man, the intoxication with magnitude which leads men to strive after bulk, obstinately adhering to the illusion that "bigger" means "better." Men have perceived only that dimensions can be attained which will put them beyond competition and not that if they persist in this blind alley of evolution they will eventually be immobilised by their own gargantuan creations, no longer able to gather the materials necessary for them and be faced, as were the giant reptiles, with inevitable extinction. Every step in human evolution, as in the evolution of other living things, must be justified. Nature, left to itself, rapidly reaches a state of equilibrium in any given set of circumstances. Man has to consciously establish and maintain his. This cannot be done by excluding the individual from the life process of human society, meaning the processes of production. Individual evolution, as Gandhi emphatically states, is not only wholly consistent with the evolution of the human race but the race cannot progress without the units of which it is composed progressing. Conversely no individual can progress without the race as a whole progressing.

There will no doubt always be, as there always has been, certain things which can only be done by large aggregates of labour power and types of work, such as mining, so dangerous that the fewer human beings engaged on them the better. In such exceptional cases large machinery may be considered necessary. That its disadvantages can be minimised, its advantages reserved for the people as a whole and the requirements of hygiene met to an increasing extent has been shown by Russia.

Transference of the ownership of the instruments of production to the state however does not of itself affect the serial division of labour or seal the fissure between the working man and his tool. In retaining large-scale machinery, this division of labour with all the evil effects Marx enumerated has been retained. Attention has been focused upon the amelioration of working conditions while the work process itself remained unchanged. No fundamental revolution in the mode of production has taken place. Marx wrote: "The separation between the Man of Labour and the Instruments of Labour once established, such a state of things will maintain itself and reproduce itself upon a constantly increasing scale, until a new and fundamental revolution in the mode of production should again overturn it, and restore the original union in a new historical form." \*

Symbol of this new and fundamental revolution in the mode of production is the improved Yeravda spinning wheel of Mahatma Gandhi. The textile industry affords a conspicuous example of the many things at present made in large-scale factories which can be made in small productive units, individual workshops or homes with much more benefit to all concerned. In this the experience of China is instructive. With the outbreak of the present war and the fall of her industrial centres on the coast China lost *all* her textile factories. Improved spinning wheels were put into the homes of the people and the result was "greatly increased production in spite of greatly reduced facilities", according to Irma Highbaugh, writing of the effects of the war on rural homes in "Wartime China As Seen By Westerners." In one country of Szechwan alone 30,000 women, spinning at home, were earning on the average five dollars a week in 1942. There was no cloth shortage in China. In a country like India which is on the threshold of modern industrial development,

\* Karl Marx : *Value, Price and Profit : addressed to Working Men*. pp. 56-57

it ought to be wholly possible not only to select inventions for use in industry on principles more consistent with human development but to transform the material basis of production within a comparatively short time. Technological considerations would not stand in the way. Laski tells us that "if technological considerations alone prevailed, Mill would never have had to write his famous lament over the failure of machinery to improve the lot of man."\*

Of course in the beginning measures would have to be taken, as they had to be taken in Russia, which appear economically unsound. It is difficult to see how, as long as the serial division of labour remains the basis of production, an individual can be trained to act like anything but a machine, whether the training agency be the state or a private concern, nor how Marx's vision of society as an association of free and independent producers can be realised. As the worker is enabled to use his productive powers more and more fully, society will undoubtedly be able to do the same. The ultimate increase of productivity can but exceed the wildest dreams of large-scale industrialists.

So it is to the machine that is also a tool that man must turn to keep himself in the main line of evolution the human race is pursuing. Not that this machine cannot be abused. It both can and has been. Take the sewing machine for instance. To a housewife it can be a valuable tool which she uses to the advantage of herself and her family. On the other hand, a number of machines may be run as parts of a corporate mechanism and the sewing so divided among women operatives that one spends all her time stitching side seams, another sleeves, and so forth. In this case it is in no wise better than Marx's machine, being used like one. This use is as much an abuse of a valuable device as was the breaking of wretches on the wheel in the Middle Ages.

The individual or hand machine, however, gives us hope of the future ; it can secure to us the advantages of machinery while making it possible to do away with its disadvantages. With the symbolic spinning wheel of India comes the vision of a new organisation of human work in accordance with the development of mankind, in which man is master of, not mastered by, production. The psychical salvation of men is based upon the means and the liberty to live. The means is the tool. Tools are the instruments and evidence of the ceaseless progress of man towards effective humanity.

\* *Liberty in the Modern State* : H. J. Laski.

# MODERN POETRY AND TAGORE'S PARADOX

*By* SUNIL CHANDRA SARKAR

RABINDRANATH, in an article on modernism in poetry, published a few years before his death, said that this modernism was something "eternally modern". This gave an excellent handle to a group of literary persons who were just at that moment eagerly looking out for opportunities of opposing Tagore, hoping thereby to win their way to a reputation for originality. A paradox of course it was, and the poet meant it to be so. But whereas for the poet it had a deep meaning that justified this bold oxymoron, to the critics it was only a poetic way of clouding the issue and saying nothing in beautiful language. A study however of those poets and critics of England who are supposed to be most competent to speak on this subject with authority would show that there is substantial agreement between their view of what is truly modern in poetry and the view taken by the poet. An analysis is attempted here of the views of T. S. Eliot. It is interesting to note that, in their final stand, the two most distinguished English poets of modern times, W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot, are in agreement, as will be shown in this essay.

The question is, what is the aim of modern poetry? Eliot's answer is not clear; the sudden flashes of intuitive perception that give Eliot's critical writings their value, ignore by their very nature the necessity of an underlying interrelation among the different aspects of his theory, of a sound logical structure uniting the parts into a whole, so that he seems to have, not one aim, but a multiplicity of aims. Each of the aims seems to draw its support from a distinct train of thoughts of which it is the logical conclusion; but neither are these different sequences of thought clearly and systematically expressed, nor are they articulated with one another.

All these aims, more or less, betray a belief in the possibility of a further development of poetry—a progress either in the direction of greater variety or of an improved quality. Only one of these aims interprets the newness of the poetry it envisages in terms of time, makes modernism synonymous with contemporaneity. But the other two—for there are three chief recognisable aims—tend to detach the notion of time from the concept of modernism and use the latter in a special, absolute sense. The second aim seeks to extend the critical perspective over the whole field of World's literature and to determine



the individual poet's relative position therein. The third aim looks into the nature of the poetic process and endeavours to arrive at perennial truths, "laws" governing the art of making poetry. If modernity must be judged by these aims, the word "modern" indeed will have to be stretched a good deal to contain a far wider meaning than it originally had,—a suggestion of universal values.

The three aims, with their lost links supplied and implicit assumptions made explicit, may perhaps be stated as follows :

*First Aim.* Progress in human thought and sciences, as well as changes in national and international situation have been responsible for considerable changes in human life and civilisation. It is the duty of poetry to reflect in some manner these changed times, to be born, as it were, with a birth-mark that would serve to distinguish twentieth-century poetry from the poetry of the preceding ages. A modern poet, therefore, instead of withdrawing himself into a private world of his own, a dreamland, should show in his poetry a keen awareness of whatever characterises his own age.

But this "awareness of one's age" is a vague and ambiguous expression. What it means, how it is related to tradition and in what manner it can be cultivated, are questions that have already been discussed elsewhere.\* The question remains how it should find expression in poetry. Most poets of course decided that it was by choosing modern themes, describing modern conditions and situations and voicing modern sentiments that one could fulfil this requirement. But this method was very soon found out to be very superficial by the more talented poets. A poet of course should be fully alive in his own time. But it was more or less realised that the evidence of this aliveness should be there in the whole *texture* of his poetry, in his general attitude and even in his perception of rhythm. This is really what Eliot means when he suggests that a modern's perception of rhythm has probably been affected by the internal combustion engine. Anyhow after nearly three decades of theorising and experimentation, "awareness" now seems, except in case of some who are merely after sensationalism and commercial success, to have lost much of its force as a specific aim.

*Second Aim.* The total reality of the human universe is changeless. The art of poetry also is a mental process discovered long ago by man and, barring lapses and erratic deviations at intervals, practi-

\* See "Tradition and Modern Poetic Thought", *V. B. Quarterly*, Feb.-April, 1944.

cally continuing unchanged up to the present day. So the question is not that of creating a new reality or teaching poetry to function in an altogether new manner, but to continue using this power more extensively, either comprehending thereby, in concentric circles, as it were, more and more of the eternal reality, or, in the absence of supreme geniuses who alone can do that properly ( i. e. assimilate the whole past tradition of poetry and improve it in height of attainment, depth or width ), utilising, as far as possible, the accumulated experience of the past, which makes the modern age what it is, as a sort of vantage ground, and from that new point of view trying to explore what has not yet been explored.

Exploring what is unexplored at once suggests new subjects, new materials ; and it is here that the first aim merges in the second. But, as has already been observed, the new "point of view" has been found infinitely more important and productive than new matter.

This aim explains the true relation between the new poet and all his predecessors taken together, the new poetry and the whole bulk of the poetry of preceding ages. If the new poet is one of supreme, unprecedented genius, he will realise in his poetry all the wealth of past poetic experience and in addition thereto contribute something of his own, thus setting up a new record of maximum attainment, pushing the *art* of poetry as a whole one step further towards its climax. The emergence of a poet like this, if at all likely, must be a matter of centuries or even thousands of years. The duty therefore of the genuine, though lesser, poets who write in the meanwhile, should be to try to supplement and not merely to borrow from or repeat older poetry, so that it may be possible for poetry as a whole, not the poetry of this poet or that, to gain increased completeness, a widened circumference of meaning. Eliot's famous, if enigmatic, observation on the relative value of the new poet and the criterion of his newness, ( which has frequently been misunderstood ), can only be properly understood in the light of this aim :

"No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. . . . The existing order is complete before the new work arrives ; for order to persist after the super-vention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered ; and so the relations, proportions, values of each

work of art toward the whole are readjusted, and this is conformity between old and new."

One or two expressions in the passage quoted may raise disputes. But on the whole, this is an acceptance of variety in poetry. Based on what may be called a "theory of relativity", it envisages the possibility of different points of view and different modes of poetic expression. The aim indeed is not to break away from the past and run amuck, but to make a *unique* contribution that will at once take its place among other works of art as of one family, by virtue of a broad affinity and at the same time have its individual, special worth by virtue of its difference from any other known work of art. As a corrective to the way of thinking which gives exaggerated importance to the romantic poets and views their mode as the only desirable mode in poetry, this aim has served a very useful purpose. Poetry is not like an exchequer that it can be augmented merely by the addition of greater amounts of the same kind. It is rather like an association of men where each new member conforms as a matter of course to the rules of membership but is valued in accordance with his own integrity, his special capabilities, his uniqueness. Poets of today, as of old, who have nothing new to offer, have very often put forward a plea of "uniqueness" in defence of their idiosyncracies, their incompetence. But that uniqueness proper is a criterion of art was recognised long before, and although it may have needed a new emphasis in our age, it cannot be said to constitute a very modern aim. The really modern aim is as follows.

*Third Aim.* In exploring the world of microbes and bacteria, the first prerequisite is a good microscope; and in exploring the mystery of the eternal spaces, a powerful telescope. The more correct and powerful the instrument in each case, the more reliable and comprehensive will be the discovery. The same rule applies in case of poetical discoveries. The mental process which constitutes an act of poetry should be so adjusted that the errors of misapprehension, partial apprehension, blurred or distorted vision, may be avoided and the "whole man" may be left free to react through that mental process, at all levels of its existence simultaneously—ranging from bodily sensations to the highest intellectual and emotional activity. The true aim of a modern poet should then be to achieve this new poise, whereby a simultaneous quickening of his whole personality (which is another name for impersonality) may be made possible. In this

manner he will not only be able to make new poetry but to give birth to a better and much more genuine ( scientific ? ) poetry than ever before.

Eliot, in common with many other thinkers of today, holds that "reality" is something alien. The modern poet should develop a degree of objectivity in his mental outlook, if he is to make anything out of this brute reality. Most of the preceding poets failed to attain this objectivity, because they suffered from what Eliot calls "dissociation of sensibilities". Thus the romantic poets lacked "wit" and the power of "irony"; Browning even lacked adult intelligence; and even if one admits that Tennyson and Browning "are poets and they think", Eliot finds that "they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose"; then again, "Milton and Dryden triumphed with a dazzling disregard of the soul"; and even though Blake had a naked, sincere mind, he was wanting in common sense, "impersonal reason". Hence Eliot concludes, "when a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience", and in doing so it may even have to "look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system and the digestive tracts."

It will have been seen that this aim tends to make the art of poetry so very scientific that it would judge poetry in terms almost of right and wrong. Whereas the second aim is based on a belief in the relativity of all poetic performances, in their supplementary character and in a consequent possibility of infinite variety, this aim tends towards absolutism, towards a faith that the poetic process can be so perfected scientifically that, in the end, there will be only one recognised and authentic manner in which the poet's mind will function. This inherent contradiction between the theory of a poet's relative significance and that of the perfectibility of the poet's art has either eluded Eliot's attention or baffled him completely. In fact, Eliot's inability to co-ordinate these two sequences of thought accounts for the strain of self-contradiction running through the whole of his life and work, his traditionalism on the one hand and modernism on the other, his dogmatism in the earlier critical writings and moderation in the later, his initial want of faith and final recourse to religion.

The last aim, taken by itself, is not above criticism. One may argue that a poet in trying to get all the component forces of his personality to work together may end with something not unlike the

phenomenon of equilibrium of forces as described in General Physics, something in the nature of a Buddhist's Nirvāna. If, however, the combination is to remain dynamic, it must be due to some inequality among the forces. And it is inconceivable that, in any two poets even, the different elements of their personality will ever combine in a fixed proportion resulting in the same final attitude. Psychology on the contrary asserts that, even in the most elementary responses of the human mind, all its factors, faculties or powers, whatever they may be called, combine inextricably, although the resultant behaviour may sometimes be predominantly intellectual, sometimes emotional and sometimes intuitive or instinctive. And if one shakes himself free of the modern repugnance towards romanticism and accepts or tolerates the attitude of the romantic poets, he will find no dearth of "amalgamation of disparate experience" in their best poetry.

This criticism, however, does not detract from the intrinsic merit of the aim, although it may serve to purge the aim of its exaggerations, its dogmatic exclusiveness. In its insistence on a greater amplitude of the mental outlook and on the presence of a certain objectivity in the final attitude, it has really opened up a new path for poetry, it has taught how to assimilate the greatest gift of our times—the scientific spirit—into poetry. Of course we cannot enter here into a discussion of the achievements in this direction of Eliot and his followers. But it is significant that even Yeats, in speaking admiringly of the young poets, Day Lewis, Madge and Mcneice, and their "intellectual passion", says: "We have been gradually approaching this art through the cult of sincerity, that refusal to multiply personality which is characteristic of our time. Here stands not this or that man but man's naked mind."

And Rabindranath evaluates the same kind of poetry in this language : "If you ask me, what is pure modernism, I shall answer : to view 'reality', not through one's own personality, but in an unprejudiced, objective manner. Such an experience would have a pure undimmed lustre, and yield a genuine joy (*ananda*) which can be derived from nothing else. Modern poetry turns its full gaze, through a non-attached mind, on the universe, just as modern science seeks through analysis to reach a detached understanding of the same reality ;—and this is what is eternally modern."

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ROMAIN ROLLAND

[ This is a record of a conversation between Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland at Villeneuve ( Switzerland ), on 24th June 1926, as preserved in the files of the Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan. Lovers and students of music will read it with particular interest. As Romain Rolland did not speak English, his sister Madeleine Rolland had acted as the interpreter. Unfortunately the record of their conversation is incomplete.—*Ed.* ]

THE talk turned to Goethe and European literature of the 18th century. ROLLAND was speaking enthusiastically about Weimar. He said that in order to catch the spirit of Goethe, one must go to Weimar which retained something of the harmony of Goethe's spirit. Goethe had lived in other places but the inward significance of his life could not be appreciated without visiting Weimar.

ROLLAND then began speaking about the music of the 18th century. He asked :

“Have you heard anything of Glück ? He lived in the 18th century. Among modern European composers he has the largest amount of what I may call the Greek feeling, retaining in music only what was serene and beautiful, and eliminating with austere severity everything that was superfluous. Before him European music was something like medieval Gothic architecture. It possessed great exuberance of spirit, but was apt to get lost in a mass of details. The reform accomplished by Glück at the end of the 18th century, just before the outbreak of the French Revolution, was coming back to pure line and pure form. He was a German, or rather a Bohemian, who lived much in France where he was well appreciated.”

TAGORE : “I have always felt the immense power of your European music. I love Beethoven and also Bach. I must confess, it takes a good deal of time to understand and thoroughly appreciate the idiom of your music. As a young boy I heard European music being played on the piano ; much of it I found attractive, but I could not enter fully into the spirit of the thing. Do the different countries of Europe have peculiar features of their own in their music ? For example, has Italian music any special characteristics ? Is the general spirit different from that of German music ?

ROLLAND : “Very different indeed. A good deal of modern European music had originally come from Italy but became completely changed in its development. In the south the music has more beauty,

but as you go to the north it becomes more and more complex. In the old Italian music of the 16th century you find delicate lines and shades, and the beauty of melody is prominent ; in the north there is more emotion. Among modern composers Puccini has great gifts but lacks in taste, and I think modern Italian music is rather spoiled and extravagant. In old Italy the composer and poet were both seeking for purity."

After some more discussion about music, TAGORE said :

"I want to ask you a question. The purpose of art is not to give expression to emotion but to use it for the creation of significant form. Literature is not the direct expression of any emotion. Emotion only supplies the occasion which makes it possible to bring forth the creative act. A Grecian urn is not the representation of any particular emotion which is at all important ; but it gives form to some definite urge of the artist's mind. In European music I find, however, that an attempt is sometimes made to give expression to particular emotions. Is this desirable ? Should not music also use emotion as material only, and not as an end in itself ?"

ROLLAND : "A great musician must always use emotion as substance out of which beautiful forms are created. But in Europe musicians have had such an abundance of good material that they tended to over-emphasise the emotional aspects. A great musician must have poise, for without it his work perishes."

TAGORE : "Take the Opera *IL TRAVIATA*. Is it not too definite ? Does it not try to describe everything in too definite terms ?"

ROLLAND : "Yes, it is a defect of our music, especially since the beginning of the 19th century, after the romantic work of Beethoven was written and particularly after Wagner."

TAGORE : "In India we have the other extreme. The singer often takes too much liberty with the music. In pictures and literature the outward form is fixed, but music requires for its interpretation a human voice ; even in instrumental music you have the human hand which is very flexible. The singer must therefore be a true artist, and not merely an artisan. In India the composer has to depend a great deal on the singer to make the music complete by his rendering, but unfortunately the singer often overshadows the composer by his own variations."

ROLLAND : "This was also the state of affairs in Europe at the time of Handel. In old Italian music, interpretation was left to the

singers, the composers always leaving many things indefinite. In the popular comedies of Italy the music given by the composer was simply a kind of sketch. The player improvised, filled in, and often sang extempore, sometimes to the accompaniment of the composer. Every time both song and music were different, and a good deal has naturally vanished."

TAGORE : "That is a characteristic of music, much of it vanishes. A good deal depends on the singer ; its medium is a living channel."

ROLLAND : "In those days singers were terrible tyrants, especially in the south. In the north we had greater precision ; the northern tradition is to have things as definite as possible."

TAGORE : "Yes, that also is necessary. Your modern music is now well organised and harmony keeps the music pure, free from adulteration and counterfeits, as the currency of a country is kept pure by the mints."

ROLLAND : "But do you think it is only music which is petrified that can be kept pure in this way ? Music which is living cannot be kept completely unchanged."

After some time TAGORE said : "You know, I am not merely a writer of verse, I am keenly interested in music and I myself compose songs. I have always felt puzzled why there are such great differences in musical form in different countries. Surely music should be more universal than other forms of art, for its vehicle is easy to reproduce and transmit from one country to another."

ROLLAND : "In every country music passes through several stages. The differences observed at any particular time may possibly be due to a difference of the particular stage of development. Music has its childhood, growth, and decay. The first song of emotion finds expression through a form which is scarcely adequate, then comes a perfect harmony between emotion and external form, and finally a certain formalisation, a stereotyping and decay. If life continues, a new overflow and a new cycle begins again."

TAGORE : "It is the same in every form of art ; in literature also we find that a new urge creates its own form. After some time a form which was once new becomes old and worn through constant usage and is no longer adequate."

ROLLAND : "Yes, and so with life also. We have the eternal flow from form to form."

TAGORE : "Master-minds create new forms. Then come men



without gift who imprison art in rusty fetters, and a time comes for breaking through bonds again."

ROLLAND : "In Europe we are in the last phase ; we feel we are imprisoned in a cage."

TAGORE : "Yes, perhaps you have become too intellectualised ; everything which is vital and humane is getting killed."

ROLLAND : "There is a tendency for our whole life to degenerate into a huge mechanical organisation."

TAGORE : "Its signs are appearing everywhere over the face of your beautiful old Europe. We find everywhere the same mask, monotonous and devoid of beauty. The Italian cities which I visited are all becoming too modern in their appearance. But Florence was beautiful ; the people there retained a certain detachment of mind which appealed to me very strongly. Without this detachment the life of art cannot exist."

ROLLAND : "Yes, they still have a more rustic side to their life. Lately, Florentines have been looking back to their ancestors. This is probably the secret of Florence being a great artistic centre."

The talk took a lighter turn as tea was brought in. We all came out on the balcony. There was a brilliant glow in the west, but a little cloud came up. A few birds were singing in the neighbouring trees. The poet came back to the subject which they had been discussing a little earlier.

TAGORE : "I first heard European songs when I was seventeen, during my first visit to London. The artist was Milson, who used to have a great reputation in those days. He sang nature-songs giving imitation of birds' cries, a kind of mimicry, which appeared extremely ludicrous to me. Music should capture the delight of birds' songs, giving human form to the joy with which a bird sings. But it should not try to be a representation of such songs. Take the Indian rain-songs. They do not try to imitate the sound of falling raindrops. They rekindle the joy of rain-festivals, and convey something of the feeling associated with the rainy season. Somehow the songs of springtime do not have the same depth ; I do not know why."

ROLLAND : "When are your spring-festivals held ?"

TAGORE : In Bengal towards the end of February and in early March when the southern spring-breeze begins to blow ; the days are hot while nights are cool and pleasant. This is also the season for the peasant to start work in the field. Is it purely association

which gives beauty to the rain-songs ? Or is it something which is really inherent in them ? It is true that we get accustomed to hear rain-melodies more frequently in the rainy season ; it is possible, these tunes bring back to our mind the joy and delight of the rainy season itself. But then the spring and summer melodies possess equally strong associations and yet they do not stir us so profoundly."

ROLLAND : "Perhaps the melodies themselves have peculiar differences."

TAGORE : "In poetry a particular word possesses a subtle atmosphere of its own literary associations. The peculiar value of such words will never be intelligible to foreigners ; they cannot be appreciated as being supremely beautiful by merely listening to them, or even by merely understanding their literal meaning, for the association will be lacking. In English take the following lines from Keats :

. . . *magic casement, opening on the foam*  
*Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*

"If I translate it into Bengali, it would become meaningless ; it would have no significance for Bengali readers. '*. . . magic casement, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*' The phrases lack in living association to our people. Similarly it is possible that a certain clause, a certain grouping of notes, gradually acquires a value through growth of association. We may have musical phrases acquiring new values, like words in literature through long continued usage."

ROLLAND : "This kind of image formation occurs in European music, for example, in Bach whose careful phrasings have been carefully studied. Much of the beauty of his music is due to the use of certain musical forms which he borrowed from the earlier music of the 17th and 18th centuries and which he used effectively with the instinct of a genius. In pastoral music, certain groupings are used continually which are even now in vogue. If these particular groupings are used in non-pastoral music, even then they would create an atmosphere of pastoral life. It is probable that your associations of rain-songs are also brought about in the same way."

ROLLAND was much interested in Indian music and asked many questions.

"What are your chief instruments ?"

TAGORE : "The *Vīna* which gives extremely pure notes . it has

not the flexibility of the violin, but preserves the purity of our melodies in a characteristic way."

He was still thinking about the suggestiveness of literature and came back to Keats :

"Although Keats cannot be translated into Bengali, I can understand the beauty of his poems. We lack the proper associations to start with, but after some familiarity with the ideals and with some knowledge of the surroundings in which these poems were written, we also can acquire the facility of appreciating them. So in spite of individual or geographical peculiarities of form, there is something which is universal in poetry. It requires education and also the growth of familiarity, but, given these things, poetry can be appreciated by every one. Similarly, what is pleasant to the European ear must have something in it which is universal. Indian music also must have an appeal to foreigners who have the necessary training."

ROLLAND : "Yes, after getting away from the part which is merely superficial or fashionable. Certain peculiarities belong only to the surface which reflect the passing fancy of a particular time."

TAGORE : "In pictures, or in plastic art, the material consists of the representation of things which are in a way familiar to most people and can easily be apprehended by every one. But phrases in music are not familiar ; so when we build up an architecture of music the whole thing appears fantastic to a foreigner. This is why it is much more difficult to understand foreign music than to appreciate foreign art."

After a little while, the poet went on to speak about the sources of inspiration in art and literature.

TAGORE : "The starting point for all arts, poetry, painting or music, is the breath, rhythm, which is inherent in the human body, which is the same everywhere, and is therefore universal. I believe musicians must often be inspired by the rhythm of the circulation of blood or breath. A very interesting study would be a comparison of four tunes of different countries. With more developed music things become more complex, and the underlying similarities cannot be systematically traced."

## REVIEWS

*THE PROBLEM OF HINDUSTANI* : By Tara Chand, M.A., D. Phil. ( OXON ).  
Indian Periodicals Ltd. Allahabad.

THE problem of a *lingua franca* for India, like the larger problem of Indian Nationalism, of which it is an aspect, is caught in the unhappy tangle of communalism. Its discussion rouses claims and counter claims, sentiments and biases, loyalties and hatreds, which befog the issue and make a dispassionate study of the problem difficult. The members of a joint family have turned litigants against one another and, instead of adding to the heritage of their forefathers, are frantically pulling it to bits to spite one another. Communalism is the worst disease of our body politic and its poison is spreading over every aspect of our life. It is therefore a pleasure to note that Dr. Tara Chand, like Dr. Suniti Chatterjee before him, has kept true to the tradition of sound and sane scholarship and has faced the problem on its merit. It's good to know that there are at least some sane people left in an insane world.

Dr. Tara Chand's thesis is simple. Since we must have an indigenous all-India language for inter-provincial intercourse, not to replace the provincial languages which must continue to grow and develop and serve the genius of their people, but to replace English which is at present our only medium of inter-regional intercourse, the Indian language which can serve the purpose is Hindustani. Not the pidgin or Bazaar Hindustani advocated by Dr. Suniti Chatterjee, but the full-fledged Hindustani of the Madhya Desha, the region round Delhi, capable of serving as an adequate medium for the discussion of all-India problems and for State purposes as well. Unfortunately this language suffers from two aberrations—Arabicised Urdu and Sanskritised Hindi, which threaten to strangle its natural and healthy development. The author pleads, with a wealth of historical and linguistic evidence, for a sane outlook which will enable this language to develop its possibilities as a truly all-India language, spoken by Hindus and Muslims alike, and written in Devnagri or Arabic script. The author has reinforced with his learning the earlier pleadings of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to the same end.

Unfortunately, we are afraid that this problem, like the larger problem of communalism, has to wait till a truly national government at the centre is able to tackle it in the only effective way in which it can be tackled. In the meanwhile, while the Hindu and Muslim fanatics, continue to quarrel over the claims of High Hindi or Urdu, English will continue to hold the field as the only language for inter-provincial and inter-regional communication. May be, that when we are fully independent and masters of our destiny and the English language need no longer be forced down our throats and no sense of national humiliation need be attached to its use, we may freely adopt it as the language best adapted to serve the purpose it has served so long. It is no longer the language of the residents of the British Isles only : it's the language of America and of many Dominions. It will most likely be taught as a second language in Russia, China, and in almost every

country in the world. It is coming to be a world language. And if it is true that even in a free India the educated classes will continue to learn English as the best available medium of contact with the outside world, not only of men, but of thought, then they might as well continue to use it for their inter-regional purposes as well. Today such a possibility seems humiliating to our national sentiment, but when the inflamed sore is healed and we are able to exercise our choice as free men, we may find reason more profitable than sentiment. However, it is a problem that can only be decided by the representatives of a free nation.

K. K.

*FREDERICK BOHN FISHER : WORLD CITIZEN* : By Welthy Housinger Fisher. The Macmillan Co., New York ; Price \$ 2.50.

IN THIS biography of 254 pages, Mrs. Fisher—herself a noted publicist and social worker—has succeeded in presenting an objective study of her famous husband without any trace of sentimentality, though she writes with abundant enthusiasm.

Bishop Fisher of the American Methodist Church was a well-known personality in India where he spent the most fruitful years of his life. He was in close touch with all that made for progress in this slow-moving land of ours and it was no fault of his that he could not make the machine move faster with all his American go-aheadness. He did his best. His idea was to build a Church of Christ in India which should not only be Indian in its personnel, but, what to him was more important, Indian in its expression. With that idea in mind, he voluntarily gave up his Bishopric with all that it meant in power and prestige when he was still the youngest Bishop in the Church, in order to make room for an Indian colleague. And it was with the self-same idea that he took the unprecedented step of enlisting the services of non-converts, who had in a way accepted the Christ pattern of life, for laying the foundation of a larger Christendom in India. The idea doubtless came to his mind by observing the work of the Ramkrishna missionaries in his native land who never made converts and who welcomed spiritual co-operation from Christians and others who had accepted the Vedantic concept of life. For a Christian Missionary, however, it was a very bold step to take, particularly in a land where Christian Missions have been so much more concerned with swelling the number of their converts than with saving their souls ! But Fisher's sincerity was proof against all opposition from vested interests.

Bishop Fisher, like his friend C. F. Andrews, had a genuine love for India which found expression in service in her cause. For this he too, like his friend, had to suffer ignominy at the hands of his fellow-Christians. His untimely death in 1938—he was only in his middle fifties—cast a gloom in the minds of those who had known him in India and whose esteem he had earned by his sterling worth ; and among them were two of the greatest men of the age—Gandhi and Tagore. To Mahatma Gandhi, Fisher seemed to be "one among the few Christians who walked in the fear of the Lord and therefore feared no man" ;

and Tagore deemed him worthy to be given, before publication, his famous poem "The Babe", one of his very few in English which was not a translation.

There are a few inaccuracies in an otherwise admirable production—minor errors which can easily be rectified. For instance, Sudha Kanta Babu, though a high caste man, is not a Brahmin ( p. 120 ), nor is Sur Babu ( p. 118 ); Rathindranath's ( not Rotindra ) wife is Pratima Devi, not Hemlata ( p. 128 ); Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born a Hindu and did not "begin life as a Muslim priest" ( p. 41 ), and the dramatic legend of the Five Disciples is woven round the life of the tenth and last Guru, Guru Govind, and not that of Guru Nanak's (*ibid*); India's capital was not removed to Delhi by Lord Curzon as a part of his scheme for the partition of Bengal ( p. 59 ). It was effected in 1912 during Lord Hardinge's regime when the Curzon partition was annulled at the instance of the King. These however do not take away from the merit of the book which is of a high order.

Kanti Ghosh.

*TO THE HEIGHTS* : By Nolini Gupta. The Culture Publishers,  
63 College Street, Calcutta. Price Rs. 1/8/-

THIS is a collection of forty-six poems written in semi-rhythmic style which is rightly considered to be the most appropriate form for the expression of sublime thoughts. These poems seem to have come out of the depth of a *sadhaka's* soul and they breathe a note of spiritual sincerity which is irresistible. *To The Heights*, like Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, will be read with profit by spiritual aspirants. Nolini Gupta's poems, however, have got a more universal appeal. His range of vision too is wider.

K. G.

*THE LARGE SAPPHIRE AND OTHER STORIES* : By Ronald Duncan.  
Kitabistan, Allahabad : Price Rs. 3/12/-.

A COLLECTION of so-called short stories with an Indian background. They are good enough for the Anglo-Indian weeklies for which they were mainly written. The get-up of the book is excellent.

K. G.

*THE RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM* : By D. S. Sarma. Published  
by the Benares Hindu University, Benares, 1944. Price : Rs. 15 or 21 Sh.

PROF. S. RADHAKRISHNAN is to be congratulated on editing and bringing out "Studies of Indian Classics and Thought" in the series which is being published by the Benares Hindu University. This lead by the B. H. U. is really praiseworthy. Time is now ripe for the entire war-torn world to know and realise the real import of Indian civilization and culture. The book under review comes under the above-mentioned series and its author has already earned considerable fame in the field of philosophy and religion. Rebirth of Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the main thesis that the author tries to describe in and through his 652 pages. The table of contents has been wisely drawn up.

It is but appropriate that the author should devote a chapter to Prof. Radhakrishnan who has done so much by his books to disseminate a correct knowledge of Hinduism to the East and the West. In the chapter on Radhakrishnan the author opines that the learned professor advocates what may be called absolute Idealism and uses it as a criterion for testing the value and validity of different philosophies. We agree with the author when he says that Prof. Radhakrishnan expounds the idealist view of life by basing his arguments on the religious and mystic experiences of the ancient Hindu sages.

The book begins with a long historical introduction to the modern movements of Hinduism. The introduction is highly useful to the understanding of the present renaissance of Hinduism. The chapter on Raja Rammohun Roy and the Brahmo Samaj has been written well and here and there the author has made some thoughtful assertions. Speaking of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the author says : "He was primarily responsible for that spirit of nationalism which grew apace among his followers and widened the gulf between Hinduism and Brahmoism and almost drove his successor Keshab Chandra Sen into the arms of Christianity" ( page 94 ). While narrating the religion of Keshab, he says : "His ( Keshab's ) religion was a sort of conglomerate of Brahmo rationalism, Vaishnava emotionalism, Christian supernaturalism and Vedantic mysticism. He had not the genius to fuse them all into a consistent whole" ( page 109 ).

Next comes the chapter on Justice Ranade and the Prarthana Samaj. Chapter IV discusses the Arya Samaj movement of Swami Dayananda, Chapter VI the Ramkrishna movement, while chapter VII is devoted to Swami Vivekananda. All these chapters have been written well and credit must be given to the author for presenting vast material within a small compass.

Mrs. Annie Besant occupies a separate chapter. That she fought most zealously for the cause of Hinduism is a fact which must be gratefully acknowledged. A persistent and fearless warrior, Mrs Besant tried to interpret and defend Hinduism. But the question naturally crops up : What about other theosophists ? Have they in any way helped the renaissance of Hinduism ? The answer, we think, must be in the negative. The author would have done well if he had captioned the chapter as Annie Besant and not as Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society had very little to do with the cause of Hinduism.

Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo occupy two separate chapters of the book. The chapter on Mahatma Gandhi is most lucidly written and the author does full justice to the topic because he tackles it with the greatest confidence. The chapter on Sri Aurobindo, one has to accept with some hesitation. Sri Aurobindo is a difficult study. The author could not present to his readers a clear exposition of his philosophy. Language becomes clear when ideas are clear and definite. The crucial points of Aurobindo's philosophy remain vague all through the chapter. The distinction between mind, overmind and supermind, the relation between human ascent and divine descent and the concept of transformation are the key-notes of his philosophy and these are not well explained.

The author has written the chapter on Rabindranath Tagore, relying mainly

on English translations of the great poet's writings. We are afraid, he could not get at the pivot of Rabindra lore. He has dismissed the Jivandevata conception rather too hastily ( p. 363 ). In our opinion this philosophical conception forms the keynote of Rabindranath's entire teachings. A careful and penetrating study of his works reveals the fact that poet's Jivandevata is only the Visvadevata. This failure to grasp the central core of Rabindra lore has perhaps led the author to class Rabindranath as a poet of the second rank ( p. 383 ). Anybody familiar with the writings of the poet in his later days will simply shudder at such an unwise classification. Rabindranath is a huge culture and any partial, second-hand and scrappy knowledge of him is rather irritating. Also the question arises : Is *Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost* the only standard of first rate poetry —as the author seems to take for granted ?

The get-up of the book is excellent, paper good and the types clear. The Reading list, Glossary and the Index are helpful.

Benoy Gopal Ray.

#### *THE LAST PESHWA AND THE ENGLISH COMMISSIONERS*

( 1818-1851 ) : By P. C. Gupta. S. C. Sarkar & Sons Ltd. Price : Rs. 6/-.

THE last of the Peshwas was by no means a heroic or romantic figure. He was the exact antithesis of his great namesake, the first Baji Rao, much as the little Napoleon of French history was that of his renowned ancestor. Neither a valiant soldier, nor a sagacious statesman, Baji Rao has never been an object of affection and veneration to the Maratha people, except possibly to a small group of his own caste-men who have been moved more by pity than by any high regard for his character. When in 1817, he so rashly attacked the Company's troops at Kirkee he was but tempting fate, for the British were then undoubtedly the dominant power on the continent of India. Mahadji Sindia had lived and died. Jeswantrao Holkar had fought and lost. The Mysore of Haidar Ali and Tipu was no more. Delhi was but a name. The Nizam had learnt discretion. There remained only the rising power of the Sikhs to be humbled. Such a juncture did this later Baji Rao choose for his foolhardy adventure. True, he had a valiant soldier like Bapu Gokhale to fight for him. But Bapu Saheb, though a fearless fighter, was no general. He was a Bayard, a knight without fear and without reproach, but he knew but little about strategy on the field. When he died at Asti, Baji Rao realised that it was all over, and he surrendered himself soon after to the British commander. I cannot resist the temptation of reciting here a familiar story about Baji and Bapu. It is but a story, and no one can vouch for its truth. But it shows what the Maratha people thought of these two men. Baji Rao was known to be a philanderer of the worst kind. On one occasion he invited all his chiefs to come to a dinner party in the palace with their wives. Others obeyed the royal command, but Gokhale did not. The seat by his side was vacant. The monarch, on learning of this, approached the general in a towering rage and asked him what he meant by not obeying orders. Bapu the fearless pulled out



his sword and, placing it on the empty seat, said, "This is the only wife I can bring to the Peshwa's dinner."

Such was Baji Rao II, whose life in confinement, thirty-three dull and dreary years, at Bithur forms the subject of the book under review. One would hardly expect an account of such an exile to be exhilarating. But the young author has, by wonderful skill, managed to write a book that is eminently readable and quite interesting. It is not merely that his style is attractive; one cannot but admire the amount of work he has put in, and the impartial way in which he has dealt with his facts.

These facts, however, are not many, and are mostly of no importance to the history of India. It is not as if we have here the Peshwa's own analysis of events in his career, such as is the principal feature of O'Meara's book on Napoleon. There were no events of any importance in Baji Rao's life as king that he could recapitulate or analyse in his retirement. He had never been a leader of men, and he had never pursued any definite line of action. What had he to talk about? In his domestic life, too, he could not have known any happiness. He was a much-married man. He had taken unto himself four wives at Poona and took many more afterwards in exile. Yet the poor man had no son living when he died. He left behind him only his adopted sons, of whom the best known was Nana Sahib—who later on engineered the Sepoy War in order to get back the Peshwa's throne. The author describes in detail the ex-king's relations with his English Commissioners. On the whole we might say that these relations were smooth enough. Baji Rao was inclined to be on good terms with the Company and was generally satisfied with his position and privileges. From Barlow onwards all the Commissioners tried to make things easy for him. But occasionally the higher authorities were tactless, and caused unnecessary pain to this more or less inert old man. The ex-Peshwa never could take a definite stand in any matter and the men round him, most of them unscrupulous blackguards, made use of his name and started various intrigues in the hope of making some money. The author describes how the Governor-General refused to grant an audience to Baji Rao and even to give him a *Khilat*. The Commissioner tried but failed to persuade Lord Auckland to be more generous. The ex-king felt deeply humiliated over this. Likewise, he was badly hurt when Government did not allow him to pay even one visit to the Deccan for religious or family reasons. But in spite of all this mortification, we cannot imagine Baji Rao, an indolent paralytic old man, having either the initiative or the energy to invite the king of Nepal or the king of Burma to invade India on his behalf. Yet the author is quite right in thinking that Baji Rao was not entirely ignorant of those conspiracies, small or great, that his officious henchmen were entering into. This, in spite of Kaye's certificate about "the fidelity of the ex-Peshwa" and "the good conduct and the orderly behaviour of his people". The author's conclusion is perfectly sound that "the ex-Peshwa had always wanted to improve his condition and had been generally anxious to create a favourable impression on the Government."

The ex-Peshwa died in 1851, at a time when the Sikh kingdom had been

liquidated and the Company was the only power that remained in India. Six years later, Baji Rao's son Nana made a bold bid to regain the throne and failed. But indirectly he succeeded in putting an end to the rule of the Company, thereby justifying an old prophecy about the centenary of Plassey.

We have no room to write anything more about Mr. Gupta's book or the subject thereof. We heartily congratulate him on being able to write such a clever and interesting brochure on such an obscure theme. May we take the liberty here of inviting him to give us a book on the glorious career of the other and greater Baji Rao ?

C. C. Dutt.

*TAGORE : A STUDY.* By Prof. D. P. Mukerji.  
Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay. Price Rs. 3/8/-.

A VERSATILE genius claims versatility from his critics. In the field of literary output alone, the variety of Tagore's creative contribution is bewildering enough. Add to which, he was a composer, a painter, a religious mystic, a philosopher, an educationist, a social reformer, and several other things besides. On each of these aspects volumes might be written and will in time be written. In the meanwhile, such versatility is the despair of the critic who would sum up Tagore's personality and genius in a short volume. Yet the lay reader clamours for such a volume and the publishers have to cater to the demand. It was fortunate that the Padma Publishers persuaded Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji to do the job for them. They could not have hit upon a more learned or a more versatile critic. Prof. Mukerji is known in learned circles outside his own province as a professor of Sociology. But he is better known in Bengal as a critic and litterateur of distinction and an authority on music. His scholarship is as vast as it is varied. He wields a facile pen and is not afraid of calling a spade a spade. He knew Tagore personally and has studied his writings in the original language in which they were written.

The last qualification is of particular merit, for the fact cannot be over-emphasised nor too often repeated that those who have read the poet's writings only in their translations can form at best a distorted, mutilated idea of their intrinsic merit and can have no idea of their place in Bengali literature,—for the simple reason that poetry is so deeply woven into the texture of the language and its sound-system that it is impossible to tear out its design without mutilating it. Moreover, what has been translated of Tagore's poetry is only a small portion and can convey no idea of its original range. This has misled many non-Bengali-knowing critics of Tagore into strange aberrations of literary judgment. The latest instance being Prof. D. S. Sarma's verdict that Tagore, though he was one of the world's greatest religious mystics, can only be considered a second-rate poet (*The Renaissance of Hinduism* : D. S. Sarma. Benares Hindu University.)

We therefore congratulate the publishers on their choice of Prof. Mukerji as the author of the book under review. We admire the author's scholarship and his ability in packing so much knowledge in so short a volume. His criticisms

are outspoken and fair and his estimate free from sentimental adulation. We may not agree with all his judgments or his obiter dicta in which the author revels, but then if we did agree, that might only show that he has no individuality as a critic. His sociological bias is stamped on every page of the book, which is what might be expected from a professor of sociology. But though this bias has been reflected in some of his historical and psychological explanations, it has not led him astray in his literary judgments. The author's sound native taste and judgment, combined with his familiarity with both the classical and modern traditions in literature, has enabled him to maintain on the whole a sane level of literary criticism.

We have only two criticisms to offer, which we do in all humility. First : the book is not well-balanced. The author might have been more considerate to the lay readers ( most of whom will be non-Bengalis ) and spared them his learned disquisition on the intricacies of Bengali metre or his elaborate and profound definition of Profundity in Literature. They are out of all proportion to the size and nature of the book. Second : the style too is unbalanced. At times the author writes like a journalist, in a racy, light-hearted and almost flippant vein. At other times he seems to be addressing a post-graduate seminar in sociology. The style becomes involved, pedantic and in places almost incomprehensible. On the same page ( 20 ), for example, occur the following sentences. "This latent dichotomy between Rabindranath's critical attitude and style, on the one hand, and the approach of personal appreciation in the style of poetic prose, on the other, was to become patent later on, till a high degree of decency and tolerance from an unrivalled position at the apex submerged it."

"Tagore was seldom happy in the mandscape of Bengal, but he was never happy outside her landscape, and womanscape too."

When a writer tries to be profound and smart in the same breath, the "latent dichotomy" in his mental attitude becomes only too "patent". These minor defects, however, do not cancel, though they partially mar, the other merits of the book, which are numerous. The book would be, and should be, widely read. The lay reader would find it fascinating reading ; the students and scholars of Tagore's literature would find in it much that is stimulating and thought-provoking. We hope the author would one day undertake a much bigger volume on the subject, which would give adequate scope to his learning and originality.

We are glad to note that some passages which were unnecessarily flippant have been omitted in the second edition. The author need not lament the omission as "a concession to the religiosity" of his readers. It is more a concession to the dignity of his own style.

K. K.

**RABINDRANATH** : By Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, Dr. S. K. Maitra,  
Dr. Sachin Sen, Dr. Niharranjan Roy. The Book Exchange,  
217 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Price Rs. 2/-.

FOUR eminent scholars have co-operated to produce this little volume. Each of them is competent enough to write a volume on the subject by himself. Co-operative enterprise is the fashion of the day, but in the field of literary production at least the readers are old-fashioned and prefer individual ventures. There is, however, this much to be said for the book under review, that Rabindranath's genius is so many-sided that it is difficult to find a writer who can write with authority on its different facets. From this point of view the publishers could not have selected better writers to deal with the aspects dealt with in the book. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty who knew the Poet intimately during the last fifteen years of his life and who is a reputed authority on Modern Poetry has written on "Rabindranath—The Poet of Modern Age". His analysis of the Poet's literary output in the last year of his life ( 1940-41 ) is of particular interest. Dr. S. K. Maitra has contributed a most lucid and well-reasoned essay on a most difficult subject—the Philosophy of Rabindranath. Dr. Sachin Sen, who has already published a book on the same subject, writes once again on the Political Thought of Rabindranath. Dr. Niharranjan Roy whose learned thesis on Rabindranath ( in Bengali ) is now in its second edition has written on Rabindranath—the Last Phase. Though his and Dr. Chakravarty's essays deal more or less with the same phase, they do not repeat each other. We hope that what the four learned writers have given us in these pages is only a foretaste of what we may yet expect from them.

The book, though neatly got up, is unfortunately full of misprints, e. g. the date of publication of *Naba-jatak* and *Sanai* is shown as 1937 B. S. ( p. 9 ) when it should be 1347. We hope that this and other misprints will be corrected in the next edition.

K. K.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

1. *Lectures on Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya*, Vol. I : By Vidyaratna P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, M. A. Ph. D. Annamalai University Sanskrit Series No. 9. Annamalai Nagar. Price : Rs. 4/-.
2. *Notes on University Education* : Being the Memorandum submitted to the Maharashtra University Committee, and the oral evidence before the Committee: By Prof. K. L. Joshi, M. A. Popular Book Depot. Bombay. Price : Annas 12.
3. *The Grand Inquisitor*: By F. Dostoevsky. Translated from the Russian by H. P. Blavatsky. The International Book House Ltd., Bombay. Price Re. 1-4-0.

4. *Iconography of Sri Vidyarnava Tantra* : By S. Srikantha Sastri, M. A. Published by the author. Copies from R. Hari Rao, Cenotaph Rd, Bangalore City. Price : Re. 1/-.
5. *Examinations in India* : By D. N. Mukherji. Hind Kitabs, Bombay. As. -/12/-.
6. *Socialism Reconsidered* ( 2nd. ed. ) : By M. R. Masani. Padma Publications, Bombay. Price : Re. 1/-.
7. *Gandhism Reconsidered* : By M. L. Dantwala. Padma Publications, Bombay. Price : Re. 1/-
8. *Paschimjatrikee* ( being chapters on travels in the west—in Bengali ) by Srimati Durgabati Ghose, 10 Debender Ghose Rd, Calcutta. Rs. 2/12/-.
9. *Communal Settlement* : By Beni Prasad. Hind Kitabs, Bombay. As. 14/-.
10. *Mahatma and Other Poems* : By Humayun Kabir. Hind Kitabs, Bombay. Rs. 2/-.
11. *Your Food* : By M. R. Masani. Tata Studies in Current Affairs. Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay. Re. 1/-.
12. *The Chinese Exodus* : By Daruvala. Hind Kitabs, Bombay. Rs. 4/8/-.
13. *Is Pakistan Necessary?* By V. B. Kulkarni. Hindi Kitabs, Bombay. Rs. 3/12/-.
14. *The Gandhian Plan* : By S. N. Agarwal. Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay. Rs. 2/8/-.

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The brush replaces the pen

Poet at the house of Mr. Mukul Dey in Calcutta, 20 Feb 1932



# MY PICTURES

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WHEN, at the age of five, I was compelled to learn and to repeat the lessons from my text-book, I had the notion that literature had its mysterious manifestation on the printed pages, that it represented some supernatural tyranny of an immaculate perfection. Such a despairing feeling of awe was dissipated from my mind when by chance I discovered in my own person that verse-making was not beyond the range of an untrained mind and tottering handwriting. Since then my sole medium of expression has been words, followed at sixteen by music, which also came to me as a surprise.

In the meanwhile the modern art movement, following the line of the oriental tradition, was started by my nephew Abanindranath. I watched his activities with an envious mood of self-diffidence, being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refused me passport across the strict boundaries of letters.

But one thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations. My instinct for it and my training in its use led me to know that lines and colours in art are no carriers of information ; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures. Their ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy some outer fact or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is, above all, meaning.

Desultory lines obstruct the freedom of our vision with the inertia of their irrelevance. They do not move with the great march of all things. They have no justification to exist and therefore they rouse up against them their surroundings ; they perpetually disturb peace. For this reason the scattered scratches and corrections in my manuscripts cause me annoyance. They represent regrettable mischance, like a gapingly foolish crowd stuck in a wrong place, undecided as to how or where to move on. But if the spirit of a dance is inspired in the heart of that crowd, the unrelated many would find a perfect unity and be relieved of its hesitation between to be and not to be. I try to make my corrections dance, connect them in a rhythmic relationship and transform accumulation into adornment.

This has been my unconscious training in drawing. I find disinterested pleasure in this work of reclamation, often giving to it more



time and care than to my immediate duty in literature that has the sole claim upon my attention, often aspiring to a permanent recognition from the world. It interests me deeply to watch how lines find their life and character, as their connection with each other develops in varied cadences, and how they begin to speak in gesticulations. I can imagine the universe to be a universe of lines which in their movements and combinations pass on their signals of existence along the interminable chain of moments. The rocks and clouds, the trees, the waterfalls, the dance of the fiery orbs, the endless procession of life send up across silent eternity and limitless space a symphony of gestures with which mingles the dumb wail of lines that are widowed gypsies roaming about for a chance union of fulfilment.

In the manuscript of creation there occur erring lines and erasures, solitary incongruities, standing against the world principle of beauty and balance, carrying perpetual condemnation. They offer problems and therefore material to the VISVAKARMA, the Great Artist, for they are the sinners whose obstreperous individualism has to be modulated into a new variation of universal concord.

And this was my experience with the casualties in my manuscripts, when the vagaries of the ostracized mistakes had their conversion into a rhythmic inter-relationship, giving birth to unique forms and characters. Some assumed the temperate exaggeration of a probable animal that had unaccountably missed its chance of existence, some a bird that only can soar in our dreams and find its nest in some hospitable lines that we may offer it in our canvas. Some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter that refused to apply for its credential to the shape of a mouth which is a mere accident. These lines often expressed passions that were abstract, evolved characters that hung upon subtle suggestions. Though I did not know whether such unclassified apparitions of non-deliberate origin could claim their place in decent art, they gave me intense satisfaction and very often made me neglect my important works. In connection with this came to my mind the analogy of music's declaration of independence. There can be no question that originally melody accompanied words, giving interpretation to the sentiments contained in them. But music threw off this bond of subservience and represented moods abstracted from words, and characters that were indefinite. In fact, this liberated music does not acknowledge that feelings which can be expressed in words are essential for its purpose, though they may have their secondary place in musical structure. This right of independence has given music its great-

ness, and I suspect that evolution of pictorial and plastic art develops on this line, aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incidents.

However, I need not formulate any doctrine of art but be contented by simply saying that in my case my pictures did not have their origin in trained discipline, in tradition and deliberate attempt at illustration, but in my instinct for rhythm, my pleasure in harmonious combination of lines and colours.

*London,  
July 2, 1930.*

*There are seekers of wisdom and seekers of wealth,*



*I seek thy company so that I may sing.*

## YOU AND I

By Rabindranath Tagore

You have started your journey,  
I have come to the end.  
Both of us take our shares  
in rounding the cycle of days.

You have the light for your work  
and the joy of comradeship,  
I have the lonesome night  
and the silent brooding stars.

You have the path on the shore,  
mine is the ebbing water,  
You plan and build your house,  
the ropes of my tent are torn.

Your hoarding grows and grows,  
mine is ever on the wane,  
You are full of care,  
without fear am I.

You and I combine  
in rounding the cycle of days.

[ The author's own translation as found in one of his manuscripts. The original Bengali : *Tomār holo suru āmār holo sārā* ( song : *Gītābitan* ). ]

# NAZRUL ISLAM

By BUDDHADEVA BOSE

NAZRUL ISLAM is the greatest poetic energy in Bengali literature after Satyendranath Datta. When—about a quarter of a century from now—he first appeared on our literary scene, Satyendra Datta's fame was at its very highest, so much so that for some time Datta's influence had surpassed that of Tagore himself. Young Nazrul, just back from Mesopotamia after having served in the last world war, fell naturally under Datta's spell, but at the same time he managed to proclaim, loudly and unmistakably, his own individuality. Here was a new voice, and no mistake. Hot, impetuous, extravagant, his verses careered wildly through Bengal, reaching remote corners with amazing swiftness. Blest by the people, cursed by the rulers (several of his volumes are still under ban), his books of poems had the extraordinary good fortune of running into quick editions; his popularity was as immediate and as immense as was Saratchandra's in the sphere of fiction. I should say that he is the only instance in our recent literary history where a young poet was immediately acclaimed by the general reading public. Such popularity is suspect. And rightly: for history teaches that the shattering successes of the day are generally the least durable part of any literature. There is always a ready market for tripe; masterpieces have to wait. What is most remarkable about Nazrul is that he combined in him the qualities of a good poet and a popular poet—and how rare this combination is every student of literature knows.

Nazrul's appearance on our literary scene synchronised with that great upheaval in Indian life known as the First Non-co-operation Movement. In those fiery days, when the whole of India was convulsed, we in Bengal found in Nazrul Islam a poet who voiced the message of the moment; his poetry seemed to slake the very thirst created by the New Initiation; his words were vivid emblems of the storm that had risen in each heart. He came to fame with a long, rhapsodic poem called *Bidrohi* (The Rebel), and has since been known as BIDROHI-KAVI or the Rebel-poet. *Bidrohi* was succeeded by many other poems of equal or greater merit, and very soon Nazrul Islam, still in his twenties, came to be recognised as one of the considerable poets of Bengal. Freedom from bondage is the key-note of the poems of his first phase, wild, exuberant, delirious poems, intoxicated and intoxicating. Like D. L. Roy and Satyendra Datta, he wrote on Hindu and Muslim subjects with equal ease, on Durga Puja as well as Kemal Pasha; his mind, fed on the myths and legends of both, and quickened by the Non-co-operation movement, was at home as much in

the Gangetic plains as in the Arabian desert, and sought to infuse in every topic the ardour of the new insurgent India. The craft of verse alone could not provide enough outlet for his abounding spirits, and so he founded a weekly which he called *Dhumketu* ( The Comet ). *Dhumketu* started with appropriate blessings from the parent sun, that is Rabindranath, and after an appropriately meteoric career, appropriately landed Nazrul into jail. Happy and insouciant, Nazrul composed patriotic songs in jail, took up hunger strike,\* broke it after forty days, served his term, came out, married and did as much of settling down as was possible for a man of his restless temper. At this time, he contributed several poems to *Langal* ( The Plough ), a weekly started by Muzzaffar Ahmed, the leader of the non-official Communist Party of pre-People's-War days. *Songs of Equality*, *The Song of the Peasant*—these titles themselves suggest the tone of the poems of this group. In these he sang of equality, of justice, of the broad principles of humanism, and sang in a loud and lusty voice. It would be banal to label these poems "socialist" or "communist" ; certainly they have nothing in common with communist writing of today.

Roughly speaking, Nazrul had produced his entire body of considerable poetry by this time, and after this, that is, in his early thirties, he turned seriously to songs. He is as gifted in music as in poetry, and from the earliest stage of his literary career, he had been composing songs which he himself set to music and himself sang to an ever-widening circle of friends and admirers. His heroic or patriotic songs, in Bengal called *swadeshi* songs, had begun to gain currency among the general public, and there was a demand for more, which he satisfied with a most startling sheaf of *ghazal* songs. It was an unexpected—and to some, not laudable—change from the heroic to the erotic, but both suited his genius, and he transferred to Bengali the tender charm of the Persian *ghazal* with such success that soon his *ghazals* began to be on everybody's lips—the elegant young lady could not disdain them, nor the street boy refrain from them. The spate of *ghazals* over, song still followed song, lovely tunes wedded to a poet's words took the entire country by storm. The manufacturers of gramophone records were quick to take ample advantage of his talents, with the result that for the last ten years or so of his active life, he had been pouring forth an incessant torrent of made-to-order songs : love-songs,

\* Rabindranath sent a telegram to Nazrul Islam saying, "Give up hunger-strike, our literature claims you." The Jail authorities returned the telegram with the superscription ; "Addressee not found." While Nazrul was still in jail, Rabindranath dedicated to him his then latest work, *Basanta* ( Spring ), a song-play.

Kali-songs, Islamic songs, season-songs, comic songs, songs about Radha and Krishna, songs about Mecca and Medina, dancing songs and prancing songs, flimsy songs meant for *pan*-shops, sombre songs for the religious-minded. It is not surprising that many of these songs, made mechanically for mechanical reproduction, lack the literary beauty of their forerunners; what *is* surprising is that some of them, despite their commercial genesis, have come out as lovely poems. All these songs have not yet been collected in book-form, and in the world of music, Nazrul-songs are at the moment suffering a temporary eclipse. Looking back, one would rate him as one of Bengal's most eminent composers. It is said that the total number of his songs is larger than that of Tagore's, but this does not seem likely. It is very likely, however, that the total number of Nazrul's recorded songs is larger than that of Tagore's, or, for that matter, of any other single composer in the world.

Nazrul's personal life offers excellent material to the biographer. His life has been the most brilliant, colourful, varied and, in its final phase, the most tragic, after Madhusudan Datta's. Born of poor parents in the district of Burdwan, he had never had any proper schooling, and there was little to check his excessive vitality and turbulent disposition. For some time he was associated with a troupe of village singers, for some time he left his home and lived with a family in a Mymensingh village, for some time he worked in a baker's shop at Asansol. Thus passed his boyhood, and in adolescence he enlisted for the war which, possibly, marks his final break with his family. Born a Muslim, married to a Hindu, he has been adored and abused by Hindus and Muslims alike, himself free from any narrow creed. To meet him has been to love him, for his is one of the most picturesque and attractive personalities in our recent history. One of Nature's own Bohemians, he has passed his life in a divinely irresponsible manner, flooding his ambience with laughter and song, with life and light and gaiety. He has never shone in conversation, but his very presence has been enough. And what a treat it was to listen to him singing his own songs! He had not a good voice, but the enthusiasm, the vibrant joy he brought to his singing kept his audience for hours, and for hours together he could and would sing, aided by tea and *pan* galore. All his friends doted on him, and he was always making new friends. A shocking spendthrift (again like Madhusudan Datta), utterly reckless in business transactions, never caring for the morrow, he lavished his splendid life-force on others, perhaps impoverishing himself. On this brilliant scene the first tragic shadow was

cast when his wife was stricken with paralysis. The doctors despaired, and the poet turned to supernatural cures. His face began to show signs of age ; he took to yoga, to mysticism, to secret rites. And one day we heard with dismay that Nazrul Islam is under the observation of mental specialists. He had been to a war, he had been to jail, he had been poor, he had been rich ; he had shouted himself hoarse in Calcutta football fields, he had spent silent hours over the chess board ; he had even started a gramophone shop ( pre-destined to liquidation ! ) ; he had been loved by every notable contemporary and by numerous un-notables ; he had been a living negation of all prejudices that sap the heart ( orthodox Brahmin ladies have looked upon him as a son ) ; his name had been a synonym for irresistible charm. And today he is mentally deranged, confined, cast off from life, with his wife chained to a paralytic bed. And he is only forty-six. The last days of Madhusudan and Henrietta are an easy parallel. But let us hope that this is not the end. Let us hope and pray for his recovery, for his return to life. And meanwhile, let us put on record our love and gratefulness for all that he has given us in the last twenty-five years of his frenziedly active life, let us honour and appraise him.

Nazrul is a loud poet, his poetry is wild and boisterous ; and that accounts for his easy popularity. His art, like Kipling's, is the art of investing a loud noise with poetry. The weakness of such poetry is that it is liable to pitiful falls. The poet's mind, lulled by the sound and fury, might produce a masterpiece in a semi-conscious inspired moment as well as fail to wake up even when they signify nothing. Nazrul's case is typical of this. He has given us many splendid poems ; he has also written much that is mere rant. His weakness is specially manifest in his love-poems and nature-poems ; these—with a few exceptions—are tainted by sentimentality, turgid with uncontrolled, unmeaning effusion. Nazrul was never meant to be a prose-writer, yet he tried his hand at prose, at story-writing and pamphleteering, and it is only natural that the excessive exuberance that made his best poetry brave and ardent rendered whatever prose he wrote merely effervescent.

Irrepressible facility has ever been the cardinal virtue of Nazrul's work, and also its deadly sin. As one reads him, one feels that words simply gushed forth from his mind, that he never paused to think, to ponder, to polish, and was rather at a loss where to stop. Despairing editor-friends used to lock him up in a room with pen, paper and a copious supply of tea, and lo ! a poem was ready in an hour. Marvellous and enviable, no

doubt ; there is nothing like it when it works. But when it does not—and how often that is the case!—the results are deplorable. It is a gorgeous gift, but not a dependable one. In this respect Nazrul is somewhat like Byron ; we have in him the same raw, violent, unbridled power, the thoughtless, ceaseless flow, that easy, careless handling of technique, that thinness of substance, looseness of form and, above all, those sins against taste which characterised the works of Byron. What Goethe said of Byron is literally true about Nazrul : “The moment he thinks he is a child.”

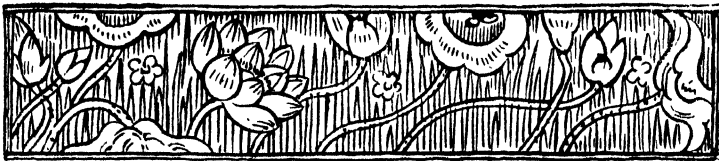
In his poem *Bidrohi* Nazrul said : “I am ever a child, ever an adolescent.” This, with profound irony, has turned true in the poet’s literary life. For twenty-five years he has written like a boy of genius ; he has never grown up, never become an adult ; the sequence of his works does not give a history of development ; what he wrote at thirty-five is not markedly different from what he wrote at twenty. As he advanced in age, he did not attain depth, maturity, compression ; the pure flame of contemplation never touched his lamp ; he was never lifted from the world of sensation to the world of thought. As Rabindranath had once remarked about one of his elder contemporaries, “he had genius, but his genius was a bad housewife.” Of power Nazrul had plenty ; but he lacked discipline, he lacked culture, he lacked taste. So his power took him only half way ; he could not climb the winding stair that leads to the tower. He is not a great poet, but a true one, and his work is simple, passionate and plentiful.

It is in his songs that Nazrul has given us his best. On the whole, his songs, as poems, are more satisfactory than the poems themselves, for the very limited space of a song cut out many of his congenital faults. His best songs are likely to prove the most durable part of his work. In *swadeshi* songs, he is the next man after Rabindranath and D. L. Roy, and some of his love-lyrics are extremely beautiful. A small number of his songs is perfect ; that the number is not larger is due to his incorrigible bad taste. Many a lovely song has been marred by one inelegant word, many a flower bitten by the worm of coarseness. His contribution to music, too, is important, for he devised a most remarkable variety and richness of tunes, restored some lost *rāginis* and even created some new ones. If only he had taste, we might proudly have honoured him as another great song-maker after Rabindranath. But one fault has maimed many qualities.

However, it would still be true to say Nazrul can best be represented by a careful selection of his songs. In them we would come across a



delicate and sensitive spirit, reflecting the colour and wonder of this earth, now sad, now joyful, now bold and upright like a soldier, now pale and dreamy as a lover. His marching songs are rightly renowned, but he has at the same time, free access to the sanctuary of love, and is not a stranger to humour. His versatility in song is noteworthy ; every mood seemed to call from him the right sort of phrase. It is not certain whether posterity will remember him as the "rebel-poet" or the "poet of the have-nots" ; but Time will wear his garland of songs. Perhaps the garland is small, but it will endure. It appears that the Bengali public that not so long ago went crazy over him is already beginning to forget him ; certainly he is no longer a fashion. He got from the hand of fashion what fashion could give, and now the time has come to look at him from the viewpoint of posterity, as much as is possible for so near contemporaries. There is no doubt that he will come back, if not in flesh at least in spirit, purged of all froth, reduced in bulk, shrunken, perhaps, but more shapely, more beautiful, so that we shall behold in him an expression of the essence of poetry. A day will come when his popularity will be a thing of remote past, and the best in him will re-appear in untarnished, untrammelled splendour. Then will Nazrul Islam come to his own ; today let us begin to give him his due.



# CULTURAL RELATIONS AND THE PROBLEM OF RESPONSE

By DR. ALEX ARONSON

[ This is the first chapter of a book entitled *Europe Looks at India*, which will be published in the near future. It is an attempt at assessing those literary and social forces that go to the making of cultural relationships, with special reference to India and Europe during the last 150 years.—*Ed.* ]

THE study of cultural relations requires a thorough knowledge of the various phenomena that contributed to the development of culture in two or more countries, art and literature, religion and philosophy, social structure and political tendencies, standards of conduct and morality, and, last but not least, the values attached to the attitudes that have come into being during the process of civilization. Far from being a merely intellectual subject-matter to be treated academically, it involves the scholar in an analysis of what might be called cultural dynamics, a study of parallel developments, influences, and cross-currents, in the civilization of countries or continents, and the way they affect human beings, both as individuals and as members of a social group in a given historical and social context.

The civilization of Europe is not a homogenous whole. And yet scholars, who have dealt with the problem of response, and in particular the response of Europeans to India, always started with the assumption that the civilization of a country or a continent is something static, easily definable, and limited to the intellectual make-up of a few writers, poets, and philosophers. But civilization is always a process ; not a being, but a becoming. It is reflected not only in the mind of man, but far more clearly in behaviour-patterns, moral standards and valuations. A human being who responds to an alien civilization does so within the context of his social group, its thought and behaviour patterns that have infused into him a particular set of moral standards and values. The problem of response is very largely identical with the problem of how one form of cultural evolution adjusts itself or fails to adjust itself to a different process of civilization. The conflict between cultures is not so much a conflict of "minds" as of standards, attitudes and values. It is a conflict between different, and frequently diametrically opposed, forms of cultural dynamics, and it is no good assuming that there exists a mysterious mechanism of response shaping and re-shaping the intellectual destiny of people, regardless of the time in which they live, the social structure of which they are a part, the economic system of which they are both the builders and the victims, the values they attach to certain given conditions of existence.

This essay, therefore, is first of all, a challenge against complacent

scholarship with its artificial, though academic, formulas, its deeply rooted intellectual bias, its prejudice in favour of abstract and generalised definitions. It is a challenge also against all the pseudo-scientific attempts to explain away the problem of response in terms of "racial" idiosyncrasy, of intellectual superiority or inferiority, of apparently indisputable cultural abstractions, of political or economic dishonesty. This challenge is justified by the importance the problem has assumed in recent times. And just as the political and economic struggle of our age can be solved only by a re-valuation of those very forces that created the conflict, so also the cultural conflict will be solved only by the application of new values and the training of new attitudes. For what would such a challenge be worth, if it did not ultimately lead to the formation of a more mature, collective intelligence and the creation of saner relation-patterns between one continent and another ?

Instances are not lacking in Europe when men of outstanding intellectual gifts have made statements of a most misleading kind about the presupposed relationship between East and West and the way the Western response to India should be "regulated". Sometimes such statements have had a very far-reaching influence, evoking counter-statements, public discussions and controversies, and often leading to personal abuses or dogmatic pronouncements on a variety of subjects quite disconnected from the problem in question. Each one of the participants in such public controversies is, first of all, out to prove his own thesis regardless of any argument to the contrary. An instance to the point is Maeterlinck's famous statement about "the eastern and the western lobe" in man's mental make-up. This statement, based as it is, upon a purely fictitious hypothesis, evoked many replies equally founded on hypothetical assumptions, and is probably still being discussed by well-meaning intellectuals all over Europe and America. The statement, it may be recalled, was made during the last war. It indeed is symptomatic of the abstract concepts commonly used by European intellectuals when discussing the problem of response between East and West : "The one lobe here produces reason, science, consciousness ; the other yonder secrets intuition, religion, the sub-conscious. . . . More than once they have endeavoured to penetrate one another, to mingle, to work together ; but the Western lobe, at any rate on the most active expanse of our globe, has heretofore paralysed and almost annihilated the efforts of the other. We owe to it extraordinary progress in all material sciences, but also catastrophes, such as those we are undergoing today. . . . It is time to awaken the paralysed Eastern lobe."

Accordingly to Maeterlinck, the whole problem boils down to a merely intellectual proposition, the supposed division of the human brain into two watertight compartments, called Eastern and Western, the predominance of the latter in recent times and the necessity to "awaken" the former which had remained "paralysed" for such a long time. Maeterlinck, significantly enough, is hardly concerned at all with the response of one continent to another, but rather with a purely *mental* adjustment which, in his opinion, is required to "stabilise" once again the Western mind. Whether that is at all possible without a re-valuation of the very attitudes that underlie all human behaviour, including of course thought-patterns, does not seem to concern Maeterlinck here. He has given us his formula. It is for us to apply it to living reality. No wonder that most intellectuals failed in their attempt. Nothing, indeed, is more significant in an analysis of the problem of response between East and West than the frustration that periodically overcomes the intellectuals, poets, and scholars, in Europe who, genuinely in search of a deeper understanding, are confronted again and again by meaningless formulas, abstractions, and concepts. Their greatest disappointment is when their cherished formula cannot be applied and proves to be unsuitable to actually existing conditions of reality. Then their desire to understand turns into bitterness and deliberate misinterpretation, the open hatred of the frustrated scholar when confronted by something he cannot grasp "intellectually". It is out of such an attitude that arise those amazing schemes, built up with all the pedantry of European scholarship, concerning the racial superiority of the "Aryans", as in Gobineau, the superiority of the "Teutons", as in H. S. Chamberlain, the "senility" of Indian civilization, as in Hegel, or of Buddhism, as in Spengler. And with an enviable, though enervating, thoroughness they will put forth argument after argument, footnote after footnote, quotation after quotation, to prove their main thesis. Once their thesis established, all they had to do was to apply it, point by point to what they considered to be "reality". Their ignorance which at times was appalling, could always be hidden behind a veil of cynical condescension masquerading as scholarship. And there was nothing to prevent them from being frankly contemptuous whenever the "paralysed Eastern lobe" interfered too much with their well-ordered plans and intellectual hypotheses.

What happened in Europe during the last 150 years has frequently been compared to that period in Western civilization known by the name of Renaissance. This expansion of the mind, in the opinion of traditional

scholarship, was entirely due to a re-awakening of that same "paralysed Eastern lobe" of which Maeterlinck spoke during the last war. According to Sir S. Radhakrishnan, just as the consciousness of Europe "was enlarged in the period of the Renaissance by the revelation of the classical culture of Greece and Rome, there is a sudden growth of the spirit today effected by the new inheritance of Asia, with which India is linked up. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Such a statement, however justified in a general manner of speaking, requires some qualifications. What exactly is meant by the "growth of the spirit today"? Does this growth comprise the whole of Europe or only some privileged countries? Does it include all the population groups of a country regardless of its social or economic stratification, or does it apply only to a minority group, an élite of intellectuals, scholars, and poets? Has this growth of the spirit during the last 150 years in any fundamental way affected the thought or behaviour-patterns of the people of Europe (as the Renaissance undoubtedly did)? What precisely constitutes this "new inheritance of Asia"? Do we find it reflected to the same extent in works of art, literature, or philosophy, as the culture of Greece and Rome was reflected in the works of the Renaissance?

Some of these questions, we hope, will be answered in the course of this book. A few preliminary remarks, however, will be necessary. Cultural relations are not established by some vague entity called the human spirit, but by men and women living within the particular historical context of their age, and responding, due to a large variety of motives, to an alien civilization. It is indeed the problem of motivation that concerns us here most. The fact that human beings respond to something that is foreign to their outlook on life is in itself hardly of any significance at all, unless we can also determine the reasons, often hidden behind intellectual arguments and ratiocination, that made them look in another continent, be it for inspiration or knowledge or a new way of life. For the motives that make men respond in one way or another to an alien civilization are often elusive, and only by a study of the historical context itself can they be properly understood.

It is no doubt true that this growth of the European mind took place at a time when spiritually Europe had become saturated with its own past and when intellectuals longed for a wider and larger view of life than the one that confined them to classical antiquity and Christianity, the two forces that had shaped European civilization during the last 2000 years.

1 *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. Oxford, 1989, p. 16.

Western scholars, long before Maeterlink, looked upon the "paralysed Eastern lobe" as the only hope for the spiritual rejuvenation of Europe. Michelet, for instance, speaking about the *Ramayana*, wrote in 1864 : "Whoever has done or will too much, let him drink from this deep cup a long draught of life and youth.... Everything is narrow in the West—Greece is small and I stifle ; Judaea is dry and I pant. Let me look a little towards lofty Asia, the profound East...." Nor indeed was Michelet the first to express in words that new awareness of spiritual expansion. Since the time of Voltaire, that is, since shortly before the French Revolution, writers and scholars, philosophers and poets, have voiced similar opinions, and all of them seem to agree that Europe has become too "narrow" for them, that a rejuvenation can only come from the East. Most of them stressed the need for a moral and intellectual re-awakening, only very few mentioned the political and economic interests involved.

The fact that preoccupations of a very material kind were involved throughout these 150 years, however, admits of no doubt. The coincidence of spiritual and material expansion is far too striking to be merely accidental. And if, as some say, cultural progress reflects, in more than one way, material progress, then we have here an admirable instance to the point. Historically speaking, the re-awakened interest in Indian civilization coincided with the economic and colonial expansion of those countries in Europe which required new markets for the products of their factories and workshops. The English were the first to begin a systematic study of Sanskrit and Indian civilization because they had very definite material interests in the East and were quite naturally led to an investigation into the language and philosophy of those people who had become both politically and economically their subjects. The first Sanskrit scholars and Indologists were either Government officials or Missionaries. The reason why France lagged behind is to be found in the fact that her interests were at that time already more confined to the Near East than to India. The country, therefore, in which the Industrial Revolution first originated, accelerating thereby the rise of the middle-classes, was also the first to investigate the civilization of India. For, on the one hand, the Industrial Revolution had opened up a new market in the East and, on the other, the middle classes were thirsty for a vaster and less limited kind of knowledge. They indeed revolted against the aristocratic culture of their predecessors, confined as it was to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, and demanded fresh spiritual food. The middle classes stood for the expansion of the empire as well as for the expansion of their mind.

And France, which remained an agricultural country for a much longer period of time than England, was less successful in expanding either her trade or her "spirit".

It is no accident either that Indology received a truly amazing impetus in Germany during the Napoleonic wars. Here also it was a rejuvenated middle class that looked towards the East for a new inspiration and a new "renaissance". Not being able to expand economically or to establish colonies, Germany compensated her political inferiority ( as it undoubtedly existed at that time ) by some kind of spiritual superiority, brought about, if not by anything else, by the ever-increasing interest of middle-class scholars and poets in things Indian. And while the English, at the beginning, developed Indology as a science to be systematically studied, the Germans began by idealising India and transforming the East into a romantic fairyland of their own imagination. It was only very much later that Germans with their proverbial thoroughness took up Indology as a science for its own sake, while, on the other hand, the repressed desire of the Germans for a colonial empire made them expound their far-fetched racial theories regarding an Indo-Aryan or Indo-German or even Indo-Teutonic race.

India was to the rising middle-classes of Europe, apart from being one of the main sources of their economic prosperity, an escape from their own spiritual narrowness, a protest against the limitations of a purely classical culture, the romantic dream of a timeless and conflictless existence come true. From the very beginning the response of European intellectuals to India was coloured by their middle-class origin, the wish-fulfilment of the philistine or the inability of the nineteenth-century rationalist to grasp anything that did not fit in with his pre-arranged schemes and plans. Indeed, both the romantic and the rationalist attitudes towards India spring from the same source. For the nineteenth century produced both the utopian dream of the infinite and the positivism of the scientific rationalist ; both of them responded to India according to their own beliefs and mental attitudes. For the dreamer India became an escape from the scientific ugliness and hypocrisy of his age, a re-statement of spiritual and moral values, a symbol of the re-discovered human soul. For the rationalist India was a "backward" country stimulating him for social reform or political emancipation, racial theories or humanitarian enterprises. It might not always be possible to distinguish the two types clearly. Their response to India was at times coloured by their desire to escape from a civilization that had exhausted itself and in which they played the part of

rather superfluous appendages to an industrial "progress" which in its very essence was opposed to their most cherished longings ; and at times they turned into social reformers and utopian humanitarians, protesting against the inequality prevailing among men, the injustice of the caste system, and, paradoxically enough, against the gradual "modernisation" of India. In their attitudes both were equally "romantic" : India, whether real or imaginary, always remained a wish-fulfilment. And even those who most strongly protested against the interference of the "Eastern lobe" were guided by a similar wish-fulfilment ; for they deceived themselves into believing in the "senility" of Indian civilization only in order to compensate their own realization of failure and gradual decay in the West.

The attitude of Western thinkers and poets towards India was indeed to a very considerable extent that of escape and wish-fulfilment. Only those who were conscious of the failure of their own age to create new forms of life took to such an attitude. That limits the response of the West towards India to the few, the intellectuals and scholars, who had achieved that level of awareness which made them want to escape from the horrors of industrialisation and, more often than not, from the horrors of what they considered to be the coming social and economic revolution. It is indeed a minority group within a new mass-civilization that was at all ready to respond to India, her civilization and philosophy. Those countries in which the spiritual crisis, partly brought about by the Industrial Revolution, was most strongly felt, developed such minority groups earlier than relatively self-contented agricultural countries. Such a minority group can hardly be called a "movement" or a "Renaissance". The man-in-the-street, the people, at large, were hardly affected at all. Their belief in progress and the infinite possibilities of the human mind remained unshaken throughout these 150 years. Neither culture nor behaviour-patterns in the West were in any significant way changed by that minority group. India remained, and still is today, for most Europeans a vague geographical or political entity, the land of the Taj Mahal, of Maharajas and Mahatmas. The mass-civilization of Europe, with its material progress and its periodical wars and cataclysms, its literature and art, its religion and moral standards, its varying forms of government, its jazz and Hollywood and newspaper trusts, remains unaffected by the dream and wish-fulfilment of the minority of intellectuals. Only from time to time a voice is heard in the wilderness, Emerson or Tolstoy or Romain Rolland, and people go and buy their books for the sake of etiquette or good breeding, and for a few days or weeks Buddha or Vivekananda become the main subject-matter of



conversation in the fashionable drawing-rooms of Paris or London or New York. At best their books will be a literary success and might establish a new literary tradition. They will not lead to a new way of life or the creation of new patterns of thought, except in individual cases. The "growth of the spirit today" is the result of individual protest against existing modes of life. The Renaissance brought about by the "inheritance" of Asia is still in its childhood. Indeed we wonder whether it will ever grow to maturity.

In this book we shall limit ourselves to the response of Europeans to India during the last 150 years only. A more complete account could be given if we would also include the response of Indians to Europe during the same period of time. Such a study would reveal similar historical and social forces at work as in the West. For in India also it was the educated higher middle-class, those who were dissatisfied with the limitations of ancient learning and culture and who desired a broadening of their consciousness who most readily responded to the influence of the West. Here, as in Europe, it was a time of spiritual reawakening and material progress, of a new search for truth and the application of new values. And just as in the West, the "Renaissance" in India was also limited to an élite of poets, writers, and intellectuals of middle-class origin. The people remained, to a very considerable extent, unaffected. The main difference, however, between the response of the West to India and India's response to Europe, consists in the fact that the former were "free" to respond and did so out of an urgent inner need, while the latter were, first of all,—and almost certainly against their will—driven to acknowledge the superiority of a culture whose only claim to superiority—so, at least, it seemed to them—consisted in material efficiency and the large-scale manufacture of arms. It is indeed significant that, while many a great European considered the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha to be the very climax of human perfection in the realm of the spirit, only a small select group of Indians looked upon the Bible or Christianity with an equal enthusiasm. But, then, we must remember that neither the Upanishads nor Buddhism entered Europe in the wake of invading armies or colonial subjection. Indeed, European scholars and poets were "free" to admire where admiration was due. The admiration of the Indian intellectual, whenever it was ungrudgingly given, was due to an inherent generosity of heart and a willingness to understand, *despite* the loss of political or economic freedom. Such an intellectual freedom is, quite naturally, limited to the very few only, a Vivekananda, a Rabindranath, a Mahatma Gandhi.

# FELLOW-PASSENGER

A SHORT STORY

By PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI

I MET SITIKANTHA SINGHA THAKUR in a railway-carriage. For about three hours only he was my fellow-passenger. But those three hours were so unprecedented in my life, that their memory even now is quite vivid. Sometimes I think I only imagined I met him, that I never really saw him and never talked to him. The whole affair was so strange, that my reason protests against my believing in its actual occurrence. It is said dreams sometimes come true. In this case perhaps the true has become a dream. Anyhow, now I'll tell you what happened.

Five or six years ago, one evening at about ten o'clock I received an express telegram from Jhajha, saying that a certain relative of mine was extremely ill and that if I wished to see him before his death it was necessary for me to set out that night. Without a moment's delay I rushed to Howrah station in a hackney-carriage. There I heard that a train which would take me to Jhajha, was leaving in about five minutes. The train was a slow-passenger and left at an unearthly hour, yet I found it altogether full. There was no room even to sit down comfortably, much less lie down. Only a first-class compartment was empty. So I bought a first-class ticket and got in.

At first I was alone in the compartment. Then at some station on the way, I don't remember which, an old Englishman came in and started talking to me at once. After speaking of one thing and another, he suddenly asked me whether the Kashai Kali of Bowbazar was a Bhadra Kali or Dakshina Kali. I replied I did not know. He was a little surprised to discover such ignorance in a Bengali Hindu. Later on he said he had formerly been an engineer in this country and was now doing research work on the Tantras in England. He had returned to Bengal recently, in order to study the various images of Kali. After that he expounded the greatness of the goddess to me the whole night long. I was in a most worried state of mind at the time, so though his words reached my ears, they did not sink into my brain. Otherwise I would have been able to write such a thesis on Kali, that the Calcutta University would have bestowed the title of Doctor on me in consequence. Noticing how absent-minded I was, he enquired the reason and I told him frankly. After closing his eyes in silence for a few moments, he said—"Your relative has recovered."

Late in the night I fell asleep. Awaking at dawn I found that the train had arrived at Asansol station, and my English companion had disappeared. Seeing the compartment empty, I wondered whether I had dreamt about the old gentleman. Unable to decide whether the events of the night were real or not, I got down and went into the Refreshment Room, to drive away the drowsiness from my eyes with the help of a cup of tea.

When I returned about ten minutes later, I found two new arrivals sitting in the compartment. One was a military man and the other a *sadhu*. From the appearance and dress of the saheb I gathered that he was either a Colonel or a Major, for the impress of his rank was stamped all over him. Upon my entering the compartment, he got up hastily and made sitting room for me. I thanked him and sat down ; but my eyes were held by that *sadhu*. The first thing that struck one about him was his size ; if not a great man, he was certainly a big one. Beside him the English Colonel looked a mere stripling. The Swami was as broad as he was tall. Judging by sight, I calculated that the width of his chest must be at least 48 in. Yet he was not stout. I had not the slightest doubt that such a figure belonged to a champion wrestler. But assuming he was a wrestler, there was no coarseness about his appearance. He was fair, that is to say the sort of colour that is made by mixing copper and silver, when the former is alloyed with the latter. His eyes were as blue and hard as turquoise. Such cruel eyes I had never beheld in a human face before. He was wearing a saffron turban and Peshawari slippers. I was somewhat taken aback at seeing him, for I did not know that Pathans became ascetics, and I took for granted that this man could be no other than a Pathan. There was an expression of calm intrepidity in his eyes and face, such as is seldom seen among either householders or ascetics in this country.

Seeing that I was staring open-mouthed at him, the *sadhu* said to me in Bengali :

"Sir, do you think I have got into this compartment by mistake—that I have taken first for third class ?—I am not so lost to all sense of responsibility. Here, look at my ticket."

Ruffled by his remark, I said—"No, why should I think so ? Nowadays I see a good many *sadhus* travelling first-class. Why, some even have saloons to themselves."

The reply to this was a loud laugh. Then he said, "That sir, is at somebody else's expense. I sir, have no disciples who believe that by buying me a seat in the first-class they will secure a seat in heaven. God does not enjoin begging on all who don the saffron robe."

"No, of course not."

"If it were possible to say what sort of a person one is from one's dress, you would have to be considered a *saheb*."

As I was wearing English clothes, I had to swallow the *sadhu's* gibe in silence.

After this he raised his face and gazed at the sky with eyes rapt in meditation. For some time he was absent-mindedly quiet. Then he scrutinized the Colonel attentively. Suddenly his eyes fell on the Colonel's cannon-like gun. Immediately he asked in English :

"May I have a look at your weapon, sir?"

"Certainly, here it is," answered the Colonel and placed the gun in the *sadhu's* hands, who took it and said "Thank you."

"It's a Winchester repeater," he said, handling it.

"That's right."

"Splendid weapon—but no use for us *shikaris*."

"No, it's not a sporting gun."

"Would you care to have a look at my gun?—I am sure you will like it." With this he pulled out a gun-case from beneath the seat and taking out a rifle, said—"Let me take out the balls." After removing two cartridges, he handed the gun to the Englishman. The *saheb* was absolutely charmed at the sight of it.

"It's a beauty," he said softly twice or thrice. Then he asked, "Did you get it in Calcutta?"

"No, I brought it out from England."

"It must have cost a pot of money."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds."

The discussion that followed between the *saheb* and the Swami was unintelligible to me. I remember only one or two English words—such as twelve-bore, 454, Holland & Holland, etc. I surmised they were the names of things called guns, their varieties, habitat, qualities, etc. Then the *saheb* got down at Sitarampur station and shaking hands with the *sadhu* said,

"Well, good-bye, glad to have met you."

"Au revoir," answered the Swami.

All this time I had been listening with astonishment to the Swami's conversation and had gathered from it that he was a Bengalee, had been educated in English, that he was wealthy and a *shikari*. Such a person is not to be met with more than once in a lifetime.

Even more strange seemed to me his subsequent behaviour. Though

a *sadhu* he was not one inured to the sitting posture. Never have I seen a person of his age so restless. Every five minutes he would get up from one place to sit in another, muttering something to himself, and now and then pacing up and down the compartment. Whenever a train passed he would put his head out of the window, leaning so far that he almost tumbled out, and scrutinize the passengers in it with the greatest attention. We were speeding westward and the other trains were speeding eastward ; on the way they met for a second only. Under the circumstances, what a passenger in one train could notice about passengers in the other, I failed to understand. What I did understand however was that he was much more interested in the passengers of other trains than in those of his own ; because after Sitarampur he did not even look at me for a long time, much less speak. But he must have noticed that his behaviour surprised me, for suddenly he said :

“Perhaps you want to know what I am looking for in the trains that pass by ?—All right, I’ll tell you briefly. Listen.

“My name is Sitikantha Singha Thakur, by caste a Brahmin and by profession a zemindar. My father had a huge estate ; by right of inheritance I am now its owner. When father died I was still very much of a minor. So the Court of Wards took over the guardianship of the property and an Englishman became my tutor. He had been a captain once upon a time. I never went to school or college ; so whatever I learnt, I learnt from him. Do you know what he taught me ?—to ride, to shoot, and to speak English. In these three things I am perhaps—why perhaps ?—certainly supreme among the scions of Bengal zemindars. You have heard me speak English ? And what sort of a rider I am, the best horses in Bengal know. And I can lay a rhinoceros low with a single bullet from twenty-five feet. My aim is unerring. My second tutor was a Brahmin pundit. He taught me Sanskrit, ceremonial procedure, religious duties and the *mantras*. A zemindar’s son is supposed to need a sense of religious duty. So I became both an orthodox Hindu and an orthodox Englishman—Brahmin and Kshatriya in one.

“Then why this garb ?—I have donned the saffron robe not for want of gold, but for want of a woman. Perhaps you are wondering how it is that a scion of wealth should lack women ! But I sir, am not like the rest of them. Money puts one under no obligation to indulge in evil habits. Never in my life have I had a drop of liquor, nor smoked ; and until now I have never touched a woman other than my own wife. One after another, I married three times ; all three have passed away.

"My first marriage took place while I was still a minor, with a girl of equal status. That wife was what the daughters of big zemindars usually are. What she had was breeding, virtue and manners : what she lacked was beauty and brains . . .

"The second, whom I chose for myself, was a commoner's daughter. She was as intelligent as she was beautiful—just what people describe as being beautiful as Lakshmi and clever as Saraswati. Leaving all the work of the zemindari to her, I spent my time in shooting. One such girl may be found in a hundred thousand perhaps, in Bengal. In beauty many may compare with her, but in brains none."

"After her death I married again—within a month of my bereavement. It is this third wife who has put me into this garb. But don't you imagine that she is enjoying my property as a widow, and that I am wandering about morning noon and night crying—'O Lord, give me a seer of flour and half a seer of ghee !' When I was a small boy I heard a song that ran—

*Alas, alas ! it makes me laugh to hear  
Krishna will go to Kashi  
Smearing himself with ashes—\**

"I also am not the man to go to Benares, even though I have taken to the loin-cloth and *kamandalu*.† My third wife has fled the country, so I too have forsaken it. That sounds rather contemptible, doesn't it ? I'll tell you what it is all about. You may believe it or not, as you please. I don't care a rap for other people's opinions.

"In the inner garden of our house there is a big pond—for the women to bathe in. A few months after our marriage, my third wife went to bathe there one evening and was drowned. I was not at home at the time, having gone elephant-hunting in Assam. It took almost seven days for the news of my wife's death to reach me. On coming back I found her gone—but whether to the land of the living or the dead, I could not be sure. I'll tell you the reasons for my doubts.

"She was the daughter of very poor parents—but extraordinarily beautiful ; an angel strayed from heaven to earth by mistake. For want of money, her father was unable to arrange her marriage for a long time. When I proposed marriage, she was eighteen. To my surprise, her father did not give his consent at first. The beggar maiden going to become

\* A sarcastic song, meaning it is incredible that Krishna should go to Benares made up as an anæsthetic.

† A special water-gourd used by sadhus.

a queen, and fancy the father objecting ! My people are not accustomed to be so treated. I sent word to that wretched Brahmin that if he did not consent to give his daughter to me in marriage, I would take her away by force and send elephants to trample down his hut and have it thrown into the river. So he brought the girl and gave her to me out of fright. Before two days had passed, I heard a rumour that it was not the father who had objected to the marriage, but the daughter. It seems there had been a proposal for her marriage with one of my young clerks, and she had vowed she would wed none other. The fellow came from her village, was handsome and a good musician. Moreover, I had known him to be of good character hitherto. Of course no sooner did I hear this rumour than I sent the chap away. Some days later my wife was drowned. So a doubt remained in my mind that perhaps she had not died but run away. What sort of a girl she was I cannot say ; for I had not become well acquainted with her after marriage. She was made of lightning and I feared to touch her, as I did not know how to tame lightning. A very precious jewel reposing in its casket, suddenly one day disappeared. My character has deteriorated rapidly since then. Oh, how beautiful she was ! But my rage at losing her exceeded my sorrow. She did not know that even an angel from heaven dare not tread on the tail of a cobra on earth."

"Then you adopted the saffron robe because you were fed up with the world ?" I asked.

"Being fed up with the world," he answered, "is no reason for committing suicide. There are lots of bears and tigers sitting round in hopes of getting shot,—why should I deprive them of a bullet by shooting myself ?—Apart from that I could easily have married a fourth time, after the passing of my third. My relatives were searching the country for a suitable girl. I am childless, so our line must be preserved. But about this time something happened, which made a fourth marriage out of the question.

"I was going to Calcutta. A train was standing at Ranaghat station ; as ours pulled up, it moved away. I saw my virtuous clerk sitting in a third-class compartment with an extraordinarily beautiful young woman by his side. It didn't take me long to recognise that the young woman was my third wife, even though I could not see her face well. There is such a thing as instinct. Since that day I do nothing but travel about in trains;—some day I'll catch them and this game of hide-and-seek will end. The object of my wearing saffron is that they may not recognise me. And do

you know why I carry this gun ?—The day I see those two again, I will leave two bullets in their two chests. The person has not yet been born, who can steal my wife and go about hale and happy. Afterwards (this he added in Sanskrit )—There is, to the north, a godly king of mountains named the Himalayas. I shall take refuge in its lap.”

Scarcely had he spoken, than the train pulled up at Deoghar station. Another train sped past at top speed. Sitikantha Singha Thakur put his head out of the window and exclaimed,—“There they go, in that train !” He grasped his gun and leapt nimbly down to the platform. Then he pulled both triggers. Twice there was only the sound of a click. He had forgotten there were no cartridges in the gun. He took them out of his breast-pocket and thrust them into the weapon. In the meantime the other train had passed out of sight. Our train also began to move. Sitikantha remained standing on the platform of Deoghar station, gun in hand.

I have never seen Sitikantha since, either in my own or in a passing train. I can only wonder where he is now,—in the Himalayas, or on the scashore, in gaol or in an asylum ?

*Translated by Lila Ray.*





## SPRING IN CASHMERE

SAROJINI NAIDU

O SPRING how you grieve me !  
Would you deceive me with praise of your fragile  
Miraculous art ?  
Where did you copy  
Your tulip and poppy if not from the red-flowering  
Wounds in my heart ?

Who set the sweet fashion  
Of lyrical passion and taught your winged songsters  
Their trebles and trills  
Of high haunting beauty ?  
Who trained to the duty of laughing adventure  
Your rivers and rills ?

Who lent the bright cluster  
Of Pleiades their lustre, the hills their soft hue  
Like wild lilac in bloom ?  
Are you beholden  
To none for the golden rich pattern that jewels  
The wood pheasant's plume ?

O Spring I have caught you !  
Who would have thought you a traitor denying  
My script and my scroll,  
Whereby you moulded  
And subtly enfolded your world in the dyes  
And the dreams of my soul ?

# A SIDELIGHT ON INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

By N. C. GHOSH

MYTHS and legends of all races at all times afford a fascinating study, giving as they do, a picture of the workings of the mind of a race or a civilisation as it emerges out of prehistory. The myths and legends of India, this land of most ancient memories, survive to us in the rich and abundant store-house of Sanskrit literature and with the rise and growth of Brahminism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The first big fact known in the history of this country is that nearly 5000 years ago, that is to say, between 2500 B. C. to 3000 B. C. an orderly and well-established civilisation existed in the Indus plain, a civilisation closely akin but in many respects superior to the contemporary civilisation in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Our knowledge of this fact is fairly recent. Scholars in the past guessed at something of the sort, but the guesses have become facts only as the result of exploration carried out since the year 1921 at Mohenjo-daro, more than 200 miles north of the mouth of the Indus and at Harappa about 100 miles to the south-west of Lahore.

The next big fact is the advent of the Aryans into this land. No archaeological data so far exist of the early settlement of the Aryans and our knowledge about these early settlers of Hindusthan is primarily derived from the four books of the Vedas which are at least three to four thousand years old.

Indian Mythology may be divided very roughly into two specific periods, those appertaining to the Vedic age and those of the Puranic age which followed the former. One significant feature about Indian Mythology is that it does not consist of just myths which are relegated to a dim past. The ancient invocatory hymns of the four Vedas, the later speculative and expository Aranyakas and Upanishadas in which the Absolute is grasped and proclaimed, and those great epic poems of the Ramayana which is three times longer than the Iliad and the Mahabharata which is four times longer than the Ramayana are still influencing the life and thought of three hundred millions of Hindus in this land of the Bharatas.

The development that is clearly traceable from the simple yet beautiful hymns of the Vedas, with its symbolic teaching, to great and ennobling ideas which have exercised a culturing influence in India through many long centuries and are still potent factors in the domestic, social and religious life of many millions of Hindus, is of abiding interest. Herein lies the unique character of Indian Mythology which is quite different from anything else on this line of thought in other parts of the globe. The word Mythology does not really apply to this wonderful storehouse of

the sublimest thoughts that have ever been put in language. It is an entire culture, not just myths and legends.

To understand aright the traditional views of the Vedas, a very ancient world view which forms the permanent strand of all traditional views has to be comprehended properly. According to that world view, this scheme of things that we behold has both as a whole and in its elements and principles three aspects—the physical or the “Adhibhautika”, the cosmic divine or the “Adhidaivika” and the spiritual or the “Adhyatmika”. The Vedic Rishis approached and adored the Gods in these three aspects and for any appreciation of the Vedic Deities it is essential to remember this view point.

Western scholarship has not always been able to grasp these three aspects and apply them towards a correct appreciation of the inner symbolism of the Vedic Deities.

The beautiful legends connected with the Vedic Deities are far too numerous to receive even cursory treatment, within the narrow compass of this review ; I can but make brief references to some of them.

INDRA, King of the Gods, is depicted as waging many a war. One of his combats is with the Drought Demons. It is clearly a reflection of the natural phenomena of Hindusthan.

The hot Indian summer draws to a close, the whole land is parched and athirst for rain ; rivers are low and many hill streams have dried up ; man and beast are weary and await release in the breathless enervating atmosphere. Then dense masses of cloud gather in the sky ; the tempest bellows ; lightnings flash and thunder peals angrily and loud ; rain descends in a deluge ; once again torrents pour down from the hills and rivers become swollen and turgid ; Indra has successfully waged war against the Drought Demons, broken down their fortress walls, and released the imprisoned cow-clouds which give nourishment to his human friends. Withered pasture becomes green with generous and rapid growth, and the harvest follows. Mankind entreated the aid of Indra, the shining one, and their wish is fulfilled. In the hymn the spiritual and the eternal transcends the physical :

*Who will take pity ? Who will bring refreshment ?  
Who will come nigh to help us in distress ?  
Counsels the thoughts within our hearts are counselling,  
Wishes are wished and soar towards the highest,  
O none but them, the shining ones, are merciful,  
My longing wings itself towards the eternal.*

In all these invocatory hymns, the Eternal and the Absolute is hardly ever forgotten and in all the diversity the One is proclaimed again and again.

AGNI, the other great Deity who figures high in Vedic literature is the Fire God. It is true he is worshipped as the altar fire and is even produced, for the purpose of the ritual, by some sort of a fire drill. But this fire is the priest himself, he who takes man's worship and consecrated action unto himself and leads them to their destination. He is "the immortal in mortals", he is born in that which is the very foundation of man. He is the Seer Will. He is the eye that guides the man. He is the divine worker in man and Man's messenger to the Gods.

VARUNA, who symbolised the investing sky, the all-enveloping one, claims our attention next. The hymns impart to him a character of supreme grandeur. He was the sustainer of the Universe, the law giver, the God of moral rectitude, the sublime sovereign of gods and men.

A VEDIC triad which suggests a rival cult to that of the worshippers of VARUNA and other Adityas is formed by VAYU ( Wind), AGNI ( Fire ), SURYA ( The Sun ).

SURYA is an Aryanised Sun God, who drives a golden chariot drawn by seven mares. He stimulates all life and the minds of men. One of the most sacred and oldest Mantras in Vedas is still addressed by Brahmins to the rising Sun. It runs :

*Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Divine Vivifier,  
May he enlighten our understanding.*

The Rishis of the Vedic age looked upon nature with poet's eye. They symbolised everything, but they revelled also in the gorgeous beauty of the dawn and the evening, the luxuriance of the Indian trees and flowers, the serene majesty of the Himalayan Mountains, the cascades, the rivers and the shining lakes. The wonder and mystery of the world inspired their hymns and their religion.

The effulgence and silence of the dawn inspired some of the most beautiful Vedic hymns. Dawn is USHA—the Indian Aurora and she is invoked thus :—

*Hail, ruddy Usha, golden goddess, borne  
Upon thy shining car, thou comest like  
A lovely maiden by her mother decked  
Disclosing coyly all thy hidden graces  
To our admiring eyes, or like a wife  
Unveiling to her lord, with conscious pride,*

*Beauties which, as he gazes lovingly,  
Seem fresher, fairer, each succeeding morn,  
Though years and years thou hast lived on, and yet  
Thou art ever young. Thou art the breath of life  
Of all that breathes and lives, awaking day by day,  
Myriads of prostrate sleepers, as from death  
Causing the birds to flutter from their nests,  
And rousing men to ply with busy feet,  
Their daily duties and appointed tasks  
Toiling for wealth, or pleasure or renown.*

YAMA, the King of the Dead, is yet another of the Vedic Deities centred round whose figure charming and inspiring legends are narrated, with which even today the children of a Hindu household are familiar.

The rituals and *Yajnas* or sacrifices form a very big part in Vedic literature. The whole setting of Vedic sacrifices or *Yajnas* is so devised as to carry a spiritual and psychological significance. The Veda itself quite often gives the clue to the spiritual significance of its figures and symbols, myths and legends. "When they say He is come out of the horse," says a Vedic Seer, "I understand Him to be born out of the luminous energy ; He is come out of the mind's force."

Later developments carry us through a mass of most fascinating legends and we come across various creation myths. The most elaborate story of Creation is found in the Laws of Manu, the ancestor of mankind and the first law giver.

It relates that in the beginning, the Self-existent Being desired to create living creatures. He first created the Water, which he called "Narrah" and then a seed ; he flung the seed into the water and it became a golden egg which had the splendour of the sun. From the egg came forth BRAHMA, Father of all. Because BRAHMA came from the "Waters" and they were his first home—"ayana", he is called "Narayana."

Further developments carry us to the great Upanishadas wherein the BRAHMA, the Absolute, is proclaimed. The proclamation goes forth :

*Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma.*

"The Brahma permeates everything. He is all-in-all." "The real is one—sages call it variously"—"Change is only a matter of words ; the one abides."

These are but a few eternal spiritual truths which find expression in no uncertain language in the Upanishadas.

The great prayer—the greatest perhaps that humanity has ever expressed—might also be instanced in this connection—

*Asato Ma Sat Gamaya  
Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya  
Mrityur Ma-mritam Gamaya.*

Lead thou me from untruth to truth,  
From darkness unto light,  
From death to immortality.

Next we come to the Puranic legends—The great epics of India—the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The Mahabharata which consists of 90,000 couplets is the longest poem in the world. It is really an enormous poetical treasury in which everything was thrown that could possibly be brought into connection with its original story of the great war waged in ancient times in India. Ethics, philosophy, customs, rules about caste, marriage and inheritance, all come under the shield of this ancient epic. The geography, the ethnology, the migration of races in India can also be studied in the Mahabharata.

Endless legends of surpassing fascination find place in this great epic and these indicate how in the Puranic times the worship of goddesses somewhat supplanted the earlier worship of male deities. Usha, the dawn, and Ratri, the night, were mainly poetic conceptions in the Vedic age. In Puranic times, we find Saraswati, the wife of Brahma, as the Minerva of the Hindu Pantheon. She is identical with Vach, the mother of the Vedas, the goddess of poetry and eloquence.

Lakshmi or Sri, who had her origin at the churning of the ocean, became the wife of Vishnu and the goddess of beauty, love and prosperity. She has had several human incarnations and in each case was loved by the incarnation of Vishnu. She is Sita in the Ramayana, and the beautiful herdsman Radha beloved of Krishna in the Mahabharata. Lakshmi is "the world mother," eternal, imperishable ; as Vishnu is all pervading. She is omnipresent. Vishnu is meaning ; she is speech ; Vishnu is righteousness ; she is devotion ; Sri is the earth and Vishnu is the support of the earth.

The Ramayana is still a living tradition and a living faith. It forms the basis of the moral instructions of a nation and it is part of the lives of three hundred millions of people.

When the modern languages of India were first formed out of the ancient Sanskrit and Prakrita, in the ninth and tenth centuries, Ramayana

had the greatest influence in inspiring our modern poets and forming our modern tongues.

More than this, the story of Rama has inspired our religious reformers and purified the popular faith of our modern times. Reformers in medieval India, all preached the same sublime monotheism based on either the Krishna Cult or the Rama Cult. Down to the present day the popular mind in India, led away by the worship of many images in many temples, nevertheless holds fast to the cardinal idea of One God and believes in the heroes of the ancient epics—Krishna and Rama—to be incarnations of God.

The myths and legends of India, unlike those in other lands, are still the fountain of living faiths. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." The divinity which has allowed the preservation of this store house of spiritual thought in India may have a purpose behind and India may yet have a message for this world in travail today. The devastating war that is waging today to make the world safe for democracy may with India's thought-contribution be made safe, not only for democracy, but for the universal reign of reverence, goodwill and compassion, so that races and cultures will respect each other's worth, and religions will cherish each other's sanctity, and individuals will learn that "God Almighty has but one great family, in which the denizens of every kingdom of nature are His beloved children." Thus tyrannies, injustices, oppressions, exploitations and maldistribution between one race and another, one nation and another, one faith and another, shall be things of the past. May I conclude by invoking India's part in it in the words of our great poet Rabindranath :

"In that full blown dawn ( sure to grow into glorious day ),  
O Bharat, stay thou awake amidst thy sufferings, with a  
simple pure heart, keeping thy soul free from all fetters,  
decorating thy inner shrine of greatness with sweet and  
scented flowers, and sandal paste, laying thy grief-bowed head  
ever on His feet—in silence."









# IN MEMORIAM DWIJENDRANATH TAGORE

( b. 1840—d. Jan. 1926 )

By INDIRA DEVI CHAUDHURI

REVERED Dwijendranath was Bordada or Big Brother to all his intimates and associates, even to Mahatma Gandhi whom he deeply admired, and to Rev. Andrews who dearly loved him ; and Big Uncle to us, his nephews and nieces, of whom I am one.

He was the eldest and my father Satyendranath the second of a large family of brothers and sisters, children of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore—of whom Rabindranath was the youngest and greatest. There is a saying amongst us that consecutive children are apt to fall out, but these two brothers were great friends from first to last. I still remember how my father insisted on coming to Santiniketan just before his last illness, even when he was ailing, as if to bid farewell to his dear Bordada.

And yet the two were more unlike than like in most things. Physically my uncle was a tall and big-made man, my father comparatively short and of slighter build than the other brothers. Then again Dwijendranath was conservative and what is now-a-days called *swadeshi* in spirit ; whilst nothing gave Satyendranath greater pleasure than to see social restrictions for women and barriers like the purdah being broken down ;—also he was partial to things European. But probably brotherly love and childhood's associations are too deep-seated to be disrupted by intellectual differences of opinion. And there was always the underlying basis of literature and music to unify the family members.

I am not competent to judge of my uncle's contributions to philosophical literature in Bengali, though I believe they are much appreciated by his countrymen. But as a poet, his originality of diction and command over rhythm still win the unstinted admiration of competent critics. Speaking for myself, I think the opening lines of his famous *Svapnaprayāna* or Dream-Journey are amongst the finest in Bengali poetry—

সুপ্তিতে ডুবিয়া গেল জাগরণ—

সাগরসীমায় যথা অস্ত যায় জ্বলন্ত তপন ।

Of course my knowledge of Bengali literature is mostly confined to home-made stuff,—the “stuff that dreams are made on.” But to my mind, the second line with its combination of alliteration and falling cadence expresses to perfection the sense of the sun sinking, sinking, sinking in slow successive drops down to the sea-line on the horizon ; being also the perfect

counterpart and simile of the gradual falling, falling, falling of the conscious self into the oblivion of deep sleep, as expressed in the first line.

Dwijendranath's humour is also altogether unique, and also largely dependent on his inimitable choice of unexpected words and mastery over rhyme and rhythm. An outstanding example of this are his well-known ( if not, then ought-to-be) extremely witty verses on the neo-Bengali youth itching to become a full-fledged sahib ;—Ingo-Bongo being the name he coined for the species,—a name which has still stuck. Its Sanskrit metrical form is its chief claim to originality.

Another compact illustration of his verbal and metrical dexterity is his rendering into Bengali verse of the Brahmo Dharma Grantha or religious prayer-book of the Adi Brahma Samaj. Only those who know the original, can appreciate the full value of the literary power required to convert the difficult Sanskrit texts of the Upanishads into Bengali verse almost easy enough for a child to read and understand.

But it is not possible to give an adequate idea of his writings within this small compass. So I would refer those who are curious or interested to his collected works in three volumes published by his talented grandson, the late Dinendranath Tagore.

My Big Uncle was as original physically as he was mentally. Many are the stories told of his amazing physical feats, such as insisting on taking his accustomed daily bath even though running a temperature of 104°, to the despair of his attending relatives ; and coming out of it unscathed, to the discomfiture of his attending doctors. We ourselves have seen him go on with his beloved writing, writing, writing, even though all his fingers were bent with rheumatism : and can also conjure up a mental picture of him striding along the beach at Puri,—equally oblivious of the blistering hot sands beneath his feet and the burning hot sun above his head ;—whilst his much younger but much more delicate nephews lagged laboriously behind him, a long way after. A funny incident also occurs to mind of a tailor being nonplussed by an order given him by my uncle during his stay with us in Satara, ( my father's last and probably best station in the Bombay Presidency, )—to make a pair of flannel stockings for his rheumatic legs, which were a cross between stockings and leggings and Bhutia boots and heaven knows what else besides !—showing that he was as original in sartorial as in other matters. Which reminds me, he used to wear one *jibbah* in front and another behind, as an easy substitute for the conventional buttoned-up *achkan* and *jibbah* of those days. His predilection for feeding birds and squirrels, and how they

used to roam at their own sweet will over his head and body, are too well-known to need repetition—at least in his favourite abode of Santiniketan, where the house known as *Nichu Bangla* still recalls old memories and bears witness to the sage-like tenant who lived the latter part of his life and died there at the age of about 85. He used to say he would attain the age of his revered father the Maharshi, but actually fell short of it by two or three years. They are or rather were a long-lived family ; and it is a thousand pities that the following generations are not keeping up to the mark.

He often used to regret in mature age that he had failed to come up to his father's expectations in the matter of looking after the family property, and must have caused him pain. But he was cast in a totally different mould, living literally in the world but not of it. For all the interest he took in worldly affairs, he might as well not have undertaken the duties and responsibilities of a father and householder and head of a large and wealthy family.

Making paper-boxes was one of his hobbies ; not only boxes big and small with all sorts of compartments, but note-books and various other contrivances which required the utmost skill and ingenuity. But *a cui bono* ?—They have all been relegated to the limbo of waste-paper, or become food for insects ; and I doubt whether there is a single complete sample extant. Whereas if he had made them of some stronger material, such as leather or canvas or oil-cloth, as I once suggested, —they might have withstood the ravages of time, and even had a marketable value. But what did he care ?—He did things for pleasure, not for profit ; for the present, not for the future ; for *Karma*, not for the fruits thereof, as enjoined in the Gita. It was the same with regard to another hobby of his,—equally fascinating and equally futile—his system of Bengali shorthand ( perhaps the first of its kind ? ), which might have become a practical proposition if he had had an eye to business ; but which, as a matter of fact, survives only to furnish one more proof, if proof were needed, of his wonderful knack of wielding and welding words and metre into examples of the different Bengali letter-sounds. Even his own compositions, so dear to the heart of every writer, had no lasting use for him, and served only as fleeting fancies to be discarded after having been expressed and enjoyed by his intimate circle of listeners, amongst whom he included even the old nurse of the family, who bowed down to the ground after the reading of the *Dream-Journey* was over, thinking it to be a hymn to the gods,—so runs the tale.

Those who were his childhood's companions, have testified to his love of music and fondness for playing the flute. But these and many

other such biographical details must necessarily be omitted from a mere outline sketch like this, which only purports to be a slight record of personal impressions culled haphazard from memory. I would again refer those who are desirous of knowing a little more about Dwijendranath, to the special number of the *Bharati* published soon after his death in Jan. 1926, which contains short but illuminating memoirs from his relatives and friends.

His boisterous laugh,—frank, simple and spontaneous,—will be remembered by all who have come into contact with him. Which all goes to show that this hoary-headed *savant* was at bottom a child,—a child in his love of animals, his innocence of worldly affairs, his dependence on others in practical matters, his irrepressible vitality, his sense of fun and frolic; and at the same time a wise man in his kindliness of spirit, his intercourse with the other world, his devotion to God, his philosophical perception and literary power.

He was a man, take him for all in all,  
I shall not look upon his like again.



## TO THE WEST

By BUDDHADEVA BOSE

ONCE, O West, we held you golden, glorious beyond compare.  
You were the charioteer of Truth, releasing its force in distant lands.  
You were the voice of Liberty : your call, vibrant, electric, went  
    round the world, rousing the insensate.  
Suddenly on the sleep-laden Ganges' banks, in a riotous tumult of  
    life, you let loose the frenzy of the French Revolution.  
We, on that day, drank deep in the passion of your poetry ;  
We sang hymns of praise to your world-conquering Science.  
It was our large-souled men, our own Rammohun and Vidyasagar  
    who threw open our gates to your torrent ;  
The wild salt of your seas rushed into the mild Hindu blood ;  
Our hearts went out to greet your messengers, the good David Hare,  
    the magnetic Derozio,  
Life called unto life, and in that joyous giving and taking  
    Bengal's tremulous soul caught the fiery infection.  
On that day, O West, our enchanted eyes had seen only the blaze of  
    your light ;  
We had not seen the cruel coils of your greed, sucking the world's  
    life-blood ;  
We refused to look behind the scene of your dazzling achievements,  
    where your arrogant armies revelled in murder ;  
And the alchemy of your commerce turned human gore to gold ;  
And cannons, camouflaged by the sacred word of Christ, wiped off  
    old races in new continents ;  
And the canker of slave-trade ate into the roots of your life-tree ;  
And dark, vast Africa lay bleeding, her entrails torn.  
We saw not these : and even before the wonder of that splendid  
    dawn had died out,  
We saw your flowers festering with Macaulay's lies,  
And even then we deemed you fair, lovely as Elysium's dream,  
Even then, O West, we strove and prayed for your victory.

## II

Today your gorgeous apparel is torn to tatters, and you stand before  
the world's eye, naked, shameless, bankrupt.  
We can see your crooked claws and savage teeth.  
Too soon is shed the body of your godly youth,  
And now you are neither young nor old,  
For your passion is spent, yet lust is strong.  
In vain you are whipping yourself to call back the life-force you  
have lost for ever.  
The terrible torment of your flesh is tearing towns and hamlets,  
Turning fields to fens, winds to witches, the month of May to a  
monster.  
The temples you once raised to the God in Man are today the seats  
of the Golden Bull.  
Your deadly disease no longer is hidden ;  
It has spread in hideous sores all over the world :  
In Abyssinia, Spain, China ; in the double knife plunged into  
Poland's throat ;  
In the hungry people and pampered prisons of India ; in the stifled  
voices of noble souls.  
We doubt it not, O West, that the Master of Eternity will soon  
reject you,  
Even as the drunkard throws away his cup after the night of carouse  
is over.  
Go your skeleton's way, till then,  
Strike terror, spread war-fire, hurl destruction,  
More and more enmeshed in your own sin,  
Gathering curses from near and far.  
Meanwhile they wake, those whom your rapacious wheels had  
crushed to dust, your power had held in bondage and your  
pride trodden under feet ;  
Today the call has come to them,  
They are the weapon in the hand of God ;  
Your sentries cannot resist this resurrection.  
If, at the end of the day, the repugnance of the oppressed had been  
your sole meed,  
Even that would have granted you some grace,  
Some little light in your sulphurous fumes.

But those who are your best, your very own,  
Pure in soul and free in spirit,  
Your signature on the walls of Time,  
Your inner signal flashing to all countries, all centuries,  
Their voices rise in thunderous revolt,  
Bitterly, O West, they cry out your shame,  
For your insane hate is bent upon slaughtering the very god that  
even now is wakeful in your heart,  
And this, after a thousand sorrows, is still the hardest to bear.

*Translated by the author from one of his recent Bengali poems.*

## WHO KNOWS ?

G. SOUNDARARAJ

Who knows how many reeds have been filled this very hour  
And are pouring forth, enraptured, rich melodies ?  
How many wonderful buds have opened in hedges and byways  
Kissed by the warm rays of the radiant sun ?  
How many stars have come out tearing apart dark clouds,  
To lighten the path of weary pilgrims ?  
How many oysters with hardened shells of defeat and despair  
Have secreted away their lustrous pearls  
Unable to stand life's threatening storms,  
And shyly seeking refuge here and there,  
Have plunged deeper into misery's loam ?  
Who knows alas ! how many lamps have been smothered  
By fierce gusts of pain and sorrow, poverty and starvation,  
Or shattered to pieces and scattered in the dust,  
By the pitiless, all-claiming lover, Death ?



# DROP AND MAIN

G. SOUNDARARAJ

I AM but a drop of water, formless and flimsy.  
You, my Lord, are the shoreless ocean.  
The cradled stars clustering above  
Are rocked on thy billowy bosom.  
When thy storm-stored bosom heaves,  
Deadly waves surmount thy flowing locks,  
Hiss, drunkenly reel, and sink back to rest,  
As a cobra whose fury is spent,  
Having shattered to pieces titanic ocean-ploughers in their pride ;  
But frail barks happily glide over thy glossy hide,  
And with sails swollen by thy breath  
Are safely guided to the haven of bliss.  
Ever and anon swells the billowy brine  
In its endless quest to win me back ;  
And who can discern in me—a tiny particle—  
Aught of thee, when I am not part of thee ?  
But when I have found my way to thee,  
And the little drop has dropped into the blue main  
And freely mingled with thee,  
Who could know the difference between the drop and the ocean ?  
O, then shall I merrily dance and gaily sparkle  
In the hallowed light of heaven silvering thy features,  
And join the waves in their tireless quest  
To win back stray drops lost like me ;  
Or calm-faced repose on thy unruffled bosom  
And though dead to all the world  
Shall live in thee and be eternally one with thee.



# RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND SOVIET RUSSIA

By K. R. KRIPALANI

ONE of the most remarkable things about Rabindranath Tagore was that as he grew older he became more progressive and radical in his outlook. Men ordinarily tend to become conservative with age ; Tagore grew more revolutionary. Nothing testifies more vividly to this amazing intellectual and spiritual vitality of his than his outspoken reactions to the Soviet Experiment during his visit to Russia in 1930. That the author of *Gitanjali* and the great exponent of India's spiritual heritage looked upon his visit to the land of the Soviets as a pilgrimage is a proof, if one were needed, that this modern Rishi loved truth more than religion and cared for human welfare more than for any philosophical dogma. "If I had not come to Russia," he wrote in a letter, "life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete. Before judging the good and bad of their activities here the first thing that strikes me is : What incredible courage ! What is called tradition clings to man in a thousand different ways : its numerous apartments, its innumerable doors are guarded by sentries whose number is legion ; its treasury rises mountain high, filled with taxes gathered over the centuries. Here in Russia they have torn it up by its roots ; there is no fear, no hesitation in their minds. . . . The cry of the Russian Revolution is also the cry of the world. At least this nation, of all the others in the world today, is thinking of the interest of the whole humanity, over and above the national interest."

Though it is doubtful if Stalin's Russia deserves the last great compliment, the fact remains that the poet trusted the communist claim and valued it so highly that he overcame many a hurdle of life-long beliefs in one outburst of admiration. Instead of being frightened at the violent and ruthless uprooting of Tradition, he is overjoyed. The internationalist in him is pleased that the curtain has gone up on the stage of world history in this age. He is glad of his visit, for "it would have been unpardonable not to see the light of the greatest sacrificial fire ever known in history." Once he had been greatly moved by the words of a Korean youth that the strength of Korea was the strength of her sorrow. It was the great miracle of sorrow's strength that drew him to Russia. He had heard many contradictory reports about Russia. He had read of the pitiless violence of the Bolsheviks. Many friends had tried to frighten him away from Russia by painting lurid pictures of the lack of civilized comforts and conveniences in that land. He was warned that he would not be able to stand the coarse food and the crude ways of the Bolsheviks,

and that in any case whatever he would be shown would be mere window-dressing. The poet even wondered if it was not too hazardous an undertaking on his part to visit Russia with such poor health and in his old age. But "the words of the Korean youth were ringing in my ears. I was thinking within myself that in the very courtyard of Western civilization, so triumphant in the power of wealth, Russia has raised the seat of power of the dispossessed, totally ignoring the frowns and curses of the entire Western world. If I do not go to see such a sight, who will? They are striving to destroy the power of the powerful and the wealth of the wealthy. Why should we be afraid of that? And why should we be angry? We have neither power nor wealth. We belong to the hungry and the helpless underdog class of the world."

These are the words of a poet who has been variously maligned in the West as a pseudo-mystic, a messenger of the sleepy Orient, a dreamer of hollow unreal dreams, a preacher of inaction, whose poetry to the "vital" mind of the European readers seemed "cold, abstract, bloodless," whose words "lacked substance" and "contained too much that is remote from actual human issues". How many European writers have written of the oppressed people of India with the sympathy and passion as this Indian wrote of the oppressed peoples all over the globe? The Nazi rape of Czechoslovakia provoked a magnificent poem from his pen. Has the ruthless British suppression of the voice of freedom in India since August 1942 inspired a single great poet of the West?

Rabindranath Tagore was not a communist, not even a socialist. Marxism or the philosophy of dialectic materialism was repugnant to his mental make-up which sought for harmony and co-operation rather than contradiction and conflict in the process of history. His faith in the validity of individual conscience and in the "infinite personality of man" biased him against any technique of political action aimed at the exploitation of the herd psychology of the masses with a view to a wholesale violent suppression of the opposition. He had a horror of the machine dominating the man, and knew that the party-machine did it more effectively than any other kind. He believed that inhumane means were capable of perverting the most humane ends.

These were virtues of his faith rather than its failings. Where he might seem to fail as a political thinker was that he understood but insufficiently, or perhaps did not care to understand sufficiently, the influence of property-relations on the basic structure of society, the industrial basis of the modern capitalist state, the prime necessity of centralised

organisation and control of the productive forces in a society if the distribution of wealth is to be equitable and just. But the poet never claimed to be a political philosopher. He was, as Gandhiji had once called him, a "great sentinel" of the rights of man. He upheld the right of every individual, white, brown or black, to health, livelihood, education and freedom, which alone can guarantee him a fair scope for the development of his personality. If any social or political system, however sacrosanct, stood in the way of this development, he was impatient of it and willing to have it scrapped. And so when he went to Russia he could not help but admire the great accomplishment of the Revolution in raising the underdog to the status of human beings. "Wherever I look I see no one else but workers . . . . The question to ask here is : Where are the so-called gentlemen ? The masses of Russia live no more in the dark shadows of the so-called gentlemen. Those that were hidden behind the curtain are now fully in the forefront of society. . . . Just within a few short years the ignorant masses have become full-fledged human beings. I cannot help thinking of the farmers and the workers of my own country. It seems that the magicians of the Arabian Nights have been at work in Russia. Only a decade ago the masses in Russia were as illiterate, helpless and hungry as our own masses ; equally blindly religious, equally stupidly superstitious. In sorrow and in danger they were wont to supplicate before their saints in the churches ; in fear of the other world their mind was mortgaged to the priests, and in fear of this world to their rulers, money-lenders and their landlords. Their duty was to polish the very boots with which they were kicked by their masters. They knew no change in their way of life for a thousand years. They had the same old carts, the same old spinning wheels, the same old oil presses. Any suggestion of change provoked them to revolt. As in the case of our three hundred millions, the ghost of time sat on their backs and blindfolded them from behind. Who could be more astonished than an unfortunate Indian like myself to see how in these few years they had removed the mountain of ignorance and helplessness ? And yet during those years of great changes, Russia knew nothing of the much vaunted 'Law and Order' as it prevails in our country."

Education and regeneration of the neglected voiceless masses of India had been a mission very dear to the poet's heart all through his life. As early as 1894 he had written the immortal, unforgettable lines :

To the dumb, languishing and the stupefied  
must we give voice ;

These hearts, wilted, withered and broken,  
must be galvanised with new hope ;  
Beckoning them we must exhort :  
Lift up your heads this very instant  
and stand united.  
They before whom you quake in fear,  
quake even more than you in their guilt,  
They will take to their heels  
the moment you are roused. . . .

He knew that the vast majority in every society are the beasts of burden who have no time to become men. They grow up on the leavings of society's wealth, with the least food, least clothing and least education. They who toil most receive in return the largest measure of indignity. They are deprived of everything that makes life worth living. They are, as he put it, a lamp-stand bearing the lamp of civilization on their heads : people above receive light while they are smeared with the trickling oil. He had often thought of them, worked for them and felt ashamed of his own more fortunate lot. He had been forced to the conclusion that poverty and inequality were perhaps the inevitable concomitants of a progressive society. "Thus I thought within myself : It is necessary that a section of our society should remain on the top ; and how could they remain on the top if there were no one at the bottom ? . . . Civilization begins only when man extends his vision beyond the bounds of mere livelihood. The finest fruits of civilization have grown on the fields of leisure. The progress of civilization demands leisure." It was therefore necessary that the majority should labour and toil so that the minority should have the necessary leisure. The utmost that the fortunate upper classes can do is to regard themselves as trustees for the welfare of the dispossessed and try to ameliorate their misery. "But the trouble is that we cannot do anything of a permanent nature as a matter of charity. If we seek to do good to any one from the outside, that goodness becomes distorted in a number of ways. Real helpfulness emanates from a perfect sense of equality. Whatever it may be, I simply could not satisfactorily solve this complex problem for myself. And yet I felt ashamed of myself to be forced to the conclusion that the pyramid of civilization could only be built on the subjection and dehumanisation of the vast majority in human society—the workers of the world."

He had already come to believe, even before he went to Russia, that the moral right to the land belonged to the peasant and that the peasant

could never improve his condition in India except through co-operative farming. But it was not a problem that an individual could solve by his own efforts. That the State alone could and should do it he never realized till he visited the land of the Soviets. His own experience of the nature of the State in his country had only taught him to mistrust its powers. But in Russia he for the first time saw a State that was truly of the people and for the people, even if not wholly by the people. He was not misled by the obvious lack of the so-called civilized comforts which were paraded in the other cities of Europe. On the contrary he was pleased that "the polish of luxury is altogether absent from Moscow. . . . The thing I like best in Russia is the complete banishment of this barbarity of the pride of wealth."

Not was this modern Rishi scandalised by the so-called godless nature of the Soviet State. "For many centuries the old philosophy of theology and the old philosophy of politics overpowered the intelligence of the Russian people, and almost their very life itself. The Soviet Revolutionists have now killed these two evils to their very roots. My heart leaps with joy to see such a painfully enslaved nation attain such a great liberation in such a short time. For the religion that destroys the freedom of the mind of man by keeping him ignorant is a worse enemy than the worst of monarchs; for the monarch crushes the spirit of his subjects only from the outside. . . . The Soviet has saved the nation from the hands of the insults of the Czar and from the self-inflicted insults of its own people. Let the theologians of other countries condemn Soviet Russia all they want; but I cannot condemn her, and I do not. Atheism is much better than superstition in religion and the tyranny of the Czar, which were like heavy loads of stone on the breast of Russia." Indeed, he goes on to say that it was only in Soviet Russia that he fully realized the meaning of these words of the Upanishads: *mā gridah*—Do not covet. "Why should one not covet? Because everything in this universe is but one network of truth. Personal greed stands in the way of the realization of this oneness. *Tena tyaktena bhuñjithāh*—Enjoy only that which issues from this unity. From the material point of view the Bolsheviks are expounding this same truth. They consider the general welfare of humanity as the one supreme truth on earth. So they are willing to share equally all that society produces as one. The greed of wealth is the natural concomitant of personal ownership of property. They want to abolish this first, and then declare: Enjoy only that which comes from this unity."

This is no doubt too idealistic an interpretation of the Bolshevik urge. What is, however, significant is the poet's genuine enthusiasm at the spectacle of a society that had for the first time in history provided equal opportunities of health, education and happiness to all its citizens, irrespective of race, colour or religion. His enthusiasm was all the more sincere because he himself came from a country where these opportunities were effectively denied to the vast majority of his countrymen. Again and again he contrasted what he saw in Russia with what he found at home. "The most costly tax we pay for our weakness," he wrote from Russia, "is the fact that instead of trying to remove the causes for contempt, the British are busy proving to the world that we are worthy of contempt. Sound education automatically solves all problems of human society. We are deprived of that boon in India, for the British 'Law and Order' leaves no room for any other improvement. After providing for 'Law and Order' the treasury is totally empty. . . . The tale of our Hindu-Moslem quarrels is spread over the world by interested parties. Here, too, in olden days, the Christians fought with the Jews most barbarously. But education and good government have banished such communal quarrels from Russia for ever. I often think that Mr. Simon and his Commission should have visited Soviet Russia before coming to India."

Tagore was not a blind admirer of whatever he saw in the Soviet Union. He was aware of the ruthless nature of the Party dictatorship and of the many moral limitations of the Soviet experiment. But these defects did not make him lose his perspective. He did not miss the wood for the trees. He knew that a certain element of barbarism was inevitable in such a great and violent upheaval as the Bolshevik Revolution, but he trusted the great creative urge behind the revolution and believed that if those who held the destiny of Russia in their hands were true to that urge, they would gradually and in the long run eliminate the crudities one by one. They had made a great beginning and were educating the masses, and once the masses were properly educated, they would themselves act as a healthy check on their rulers. He wrote :

"I admit that dictatorship is a great nuisance and I also believe that in its name many persecutions take place in Russia. Its negative aspect is compulsion, which is sin. But I have also seen its positive aspect, and that is education, the very reverse of force. If the mind of the people is one in the making of the country's fortunes its activity becomes creative and permanent. To the zealots of authority the only means of obtaining their ends is to keep everybody else's mind paralysed by ignorance. In

the reign of the Tzars people's mind deprived of education was under a spell and round it like a boa-constrictor coiled religious superstition. The emperor could without difficulty put this ignorance to his own use. It was then easy to provoke orgies of frightfulness in the name of religion between Jews and Christians, between Mussulmans and Armenians. The loosely knit country weakened by ignorance and religious superstition fell an easy prey to the external enemy. Nothing could be more favourable to the perpetuation of autocratic rule. . . .

"In recent years Russia has witnessed the vigorous rule of the dictator. But to perpetuate itself it has not chosen the path of the Tzars, namely the subduing of the people's mind by ignorance and religious superstition, the impairing of their manliness by the lash of the Cossacks. I do not believe that the punitive rod is inactive in the present Russian regime, but at the same time education expands with extraordinary vigour. The reason is that greed of individual or party power and of money is absent. There exists the irrepressible will to convert the public to a particular economic doctrine and to make a man of everybody, irrespective of race, colour and class. Had it not been so, one must needs agree with the French pedant who said that to give education is a great mistake.

"Time is not yet to say whether the economic doctrine is completely valid, because so long it had tottered among books : never before had it enjoyed freedom so fearlessly and over so vast a field. At the very outset they ruthlessly banished the powerful greed which would have jeopardised this economic theory. Nobody can definitely say what final shape it will take as it passes through one experiment after another. But this much is certain that the education, which at long last the Russian masses are so freely and abundantly enjoying, has improved and brought honour to their humanity for all time.

"One always hears rumours of cruelty of the present regime in Russia—which is not improbable. It is unlikely that her long tradition of cruel administration will disappear suddenly. At the same time the Soviet Government is untiring in its efforts to inculcate by means of pictorial and cinematographic interpretation of history the horrors of the system of government and oppression under the old order. If the present Government in its turn should adopt a similarly ruthless policy, it must be called a strange mistake, if nothing else, to create so strong an aversion to cruel treatment. At any rate, to defame Sirāj-ud-daula for the Black Hole tragedy by cinema and other means and at the same time to perpetrate the Jallianwalla massacre would not unfairly be called the height of stupidity,



because in this case the weapon is likely to turn against the thrower himself.

"It is obvious that a violent effort is being made to cast public opinion in Soviet Russia into the mould of Marxian economics ; out of this obstinacy free discussion on this topic has been deliberately stifled. I believe accusation on this score to be true. A similar attempt was made during the last European War to muzzle public opinion of people opposed to the government policy by imprisonment and hanging.

"Where the temptation for quick result is too strong, the political leaders are loth to respect man's right to liberty of opinion. They are wont to say : 'Let us attain our objectives first : we shall attend to other things later.' The situation in Russia resembles wartime conditions. She is beset with enemies at home and abroad. There is no end to manoeuvring all round to wreck the entire experiment. The foundations of their structure therefore must be strengthened as quickly as possible ; hence they have no qualms about using force. Nevertheless, however insistent the necessity may be, force is one-sided. It destroys, but does not create. The process of creation is twofold. Its raw material has to be assimilated not by coercion, but by the recognition of its inner nature.

"Russia is engaged in the task of making the road to a new age ; of tearing up the root of ancient beliefs and customs from their ancient soil ; of penalising the luxury of time-honoured habits. When man finds himself in the whirl of destructive frenzy, he is carried off his feet by its intoxication. Conceit grows ; he forgets that human nature has to be wooed ; he thinks that it is enough to tear it up from its old moorings. Who cares what happens afterwards ? Those who have not the patience to wait for human nature to come to terms in its own time believe in persecution ; what they finally build up overnight by violence cannot be relied upon ; it cannot support the burden of permanency. . . .

"Bolshevism originates in this inhuman background of modern civilization. It is like the storm which rushes in all fury flashing its lightning-teeth when the pressure is low in the atmosphere. This unnatural revolution has broken out because human society has lost its harmony. It is because the individual's contempt for the community had been growing that the suicidal proposal of sacrificing the individual in the name of collectivity has arisen. It is like proclaiming the sea to be the only friend when the volcano is causing trouble on the shore. It is only when the real nature of this shoreless sea is known that one becomes impatient to get back to the shore. Man will never tolerate for all time

the unreality of individual-less collectivity. The strongholds of greed in society must be conquered and controlled, but who will protect the society, if the individual is to be banished for good? It is not improbable that in this age Bolshevism is the treatment, but medical treatment cannot be eternal; indeed the day on which the doctor's regime comes to an end must be hailed as the red-letter day for the patient.

"I pray for the victory of the co-operative principle in the production and control of the wealth of our villages, for it recognises human nature in not scorning the desire and opinion of the co-operators. Nothing succeeds by antagonising human nature."

The poet must have been deeply moved when a young woman from the Caucasian Republic said to the interpreter: "Please tell the poet that we, the citizens of the Caucasian Republic, fully realize that ever since the October Revolution we have come to know what real freedom and happiness are. We are engaged in creating a new era for humanity. . . . Please tell the poet that the varied races of the Soviet Union want to send through him their hearty sympathies to the people of India. I can assure him that, if it were possible, I would not mind leaving my home and hearth, my children and relatives, in order to go to India to help her people."

How ironical these words sound today! The poet did not live to see the Soviet Union "engaged in creating a new era for Humanity", hand in glove with British Imperialism. He was happily spared the painful knowledge that the Soviet Union is perhaps the only country in the world today where there seems to exist more or less a complete black-out on Indian news. The head of the Soviet State regularly exchanges loving fraternal greetings with the head of the Conservative Party in England and has not a word to say for the heroic fighters of freedom's battle in India. It would have broken his heart to watch millions of his countrymen perish of hunger piteously crying for a morsel of bread, while the so-called Communists in India stood by as the watchdogs of British 'Law and Order.' Nevertheless, though the Bolshevik sympathies may have narrowed, the poet's sympathies were broad enough to have wished Russia well in her heroic struggle against the Nazi hordes. He would have rejoiced at the victorious march of the Red Armies reconquering their lost territory, even as his heart would have bled to see the unarmed freedom-fight in his own land ruthlessly suppressed by the armed might of Russia's own ally. Though he could no longer have claimed for Russia that "at least this nation of all the others in the world today is thinking of the interest of

the whole humanity, over and above the national interest", he himself would never have let his love for his land cancel his concern for the interest of humanity, and would have blessed the Allied victories even though his own helpless people have been trampled in the process.

## REVIEWS

*THE PARROT'S TRAINING AND OTHER STORIES.* Rabindranath Tagore. Visva-Bharati. 2 College Square, Calcutta, 1944. Rs. 3/-

SATIRE can be of two kinds, personal or impersonal, malicious or generous. In English literature Pope and Swift frequently stand for the former, Dickens and Samuel Butler for the latter kind. Satire as a form of art is bound to reflect the author's personal idiosyncrasies, temperamental preferences, and last but not least of all, his way of life. The greatest satire is one which impersonally, and, as it were, objectively, expresses the writer's own convictions fearlessly and in opposition to current public opinion. Great satire, like great poetry, is, however, never didactic. Its material is and must always be the common stuff of which human experiences are made. A satire that is esoteric ( the most famous instance in modern times is Wyndham Lewis's *Apes of God* ) defeats its own purpose. Swift as a writer of satire is a classic, in spite of his personal feeling of frustration and bitterness, because he satirises what is common to all men : falsehood and hypocrisy, a wrong valuation of human life, intellectual and social snobbery.

The function of satire is to lead men back to sanity and a healthy attitude to things, both living and dead, in short, to make them see life in its right proportions. And if we say that awareness of truth is the only function of satire, we do not wish to insist on a commonplace idea, but rather to point out the satirist's great concern with truth, not as a poetic or aesthetic convention, but as the very aim and end of his art. A great satire is one that illumines a great truth in such a way as to heighten the awareness of the reader. To bring about that intensified awareness is indeed the function of all works of art : but satire is like the advance-guard of some army, discovering and revealing falsehood and evil, while the poet, the dramatist, the novelist, are still groping in darkness.

Tagore's satires illumine truth from many angles of vision. In this little book only four of his satires have been collected ; we wish a full collection of Tagore's satirical writing could be made in the not too distant future. In these four sketches Tagore reveals himself a satirist of great power and insight. He is sufficiently detached from his subject-matter to avoid the usual pitfalls of a satirist—personal bitterness and malice : on the other hand, his treatment of the various aspects of life he wishes to satirise shows us a Tagore intensely preoccupied with the conflict between the ultimate good and man's failure to grasp it. The desire for education and learning, as in *The*

*Parrot's Training*, is in itself most commendable ; but the means used to achieve it defeat its own purpose and lead human beings towards a dogmatic and mechanical way of life. It is not education or knowledge that Tagore satirises in this most subtle of all his sketches, but man's lack of awareness of the truth that has to be extracted from learning and scholarship. It is not necessarily education in India that Tagore here is out to attack but education anywhere under the sun, wherever it has become fossilised and dogmatic, lacking in that inner urge which makes human beings aware of the truth behind the appearances of reality. And whether it is education or the misuse of nature by man, as in *The Trial of the Horse*, or the idea of progress in opposition to indolent self-satisfaction, as in the last two stories, Tagore always aims his satire at the apparent inability of human beings to understand what is good for them, their longing for an easy and effortless peace and their disinclination to face the truth.

Tagore is a great satirist because he is also a great poet. His concern is with the significant, his method is always symbolical. That is why he rejects the irrelevant and the particular, and deals only with what is of universal value. Despite the sketchy and fragmentary character of these stories, each one of them confronts us with a parable of universal significance. And he never preaches. Above these stories there hovers the smile of a kind and generous soul who has looked deep into life, and who, having understood so much, has nothing to forgive.

The Visva-Bharati is to be congratulated on the get-up and printing of the book.

Alex Aronson

### ROMAIN ROLLAND : THE STORY OF A CONSCIENCE.

By Dr. Alex Aronson. Padma Publications Ltd. Bombay.

Price : Rs. 5/8/-.

DR. ARONSON'S book is most opportune. There are hardly any books on Romain Rolland in the English language, which is surprising, considering his eminence in the field of European literature. The English translation of Stefan Zweig's famous book on Romain Rolland has so far been the only decent and authentic account in English of the life and work of this great European. But the book was written two decades ago and does not carry the story much beyond the end of the last great war, and is moreover silent about Rolland's contacts with the East. Dr. Aronson's book should therefore be widely welcomed by readers in India whose interest in Rolland, always great, has been naturally increased by news of his death. They have known him as a novelist, as the author of *John Christopher*, and as a biographer and interpreter of Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They have heard of him as a European Rishi, as one whose life was a sadhana. But of his actual life, the story of his struggle, its failures and its achievement, they have known but little ; for our purely English education neither qualifies nor encourages us to stray outside the orbit of English interest. Even as I write I pick out of my shelf the Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature and find that Beverley Nichols has been allotted more space therein than Romain Rolland. The fact that the latter had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1915 is not even mentioned. A Dictionary of English Literature has

every right to leave out foreign names, but certainly not to belittle them. All this adds to the value and merit of Dr. Aronson's book which has filled a real want in our intellectual store-house.

Dr. Aronson has rightly called his book the *Story of a Conscience*, for, as he says in the Introduction, "the story of Romain Rolland's conscience is the story of his age. In it are reflected the moral and intellectual aspirations of innumerable individual existences, their striving for truth, their convictions, their faith. The story of this conscience is the story of solitude and isolation in the midst of a frustrated multitude which, having lost its beliefs, is aimlessly drifting in the storm of conflicting passions and ideologies." This representative character of Rolland's struggles invests his life with an added significance. Its tragedy becomes the tragedy of European conscience, its nobility holds out hope for Europe's future. It also shows that though people talk glibly of European Culture, how difficult in fact it is for one to feel and act as a European in the midst of the ferocious nationalisms of the peoples of Europe. The life of Romain Rolland is at once a warning and an inspiration to those who would rise above the passions and limitations of their own people.

In so far as Romain Rolland's life may be considered a tragedy, it was the tragedy of an artist's sensibility burdened with a Christian's sensitive conscience. A delicate, sensitive youth happily growing under the exquisite, intoxicating influence of Shakespeare and Beethoven, was suddenly challenged by Tolstoy's condemnation of most of what had hitherto been accepted as great art as worthless and corrupt, "good more or less to provide excitement to old rakes, or relaxation to comfortable idlers." This challenge was the first test of Rolland's conscience. The second came when the Great War of 1914 exposed the hollowness of the Western civilization and revealed the fatal contradiction between its pretended humanism and the devouring greed of its rival imperialisms. What was the duty of an artist in such an armageddon? Should he act or should he merely watch? Before Rolland could adequately solve this problem, he was faced with a double challenge from the East and the West. Gandhi's way or Lenin's way? In the opinion of the present reviewer, Rolland failed adequately to solve this last and the greatest of all modern problems. His mind remained divided till the outbreak of the present War. What his reactions were to the present war, we have no means of knowing.

The book under review traces the story of Rolland's conscience upto 1939. The story is well told, with sympathy and with critical insight. Every chapter of the book is worth reading. The last two chapters—"The Knowledge of the East" and "Political Re-orientation"—are particularly interesting, for the material in them is not to be found in any other biography of Rolland. The author has done well to reprint in the Appendix Rolland's first letter to Tolstoy and the latter's reply. These two letters are a remarkable document which every one interested in the problem of art and humanity should read and deeply ponder. We congratulate the learned author on this excellent book.

*EDUCATION, POLITICS AND WAR* : By Sir S. Radhakrishnan.

The International Book Service, Poona. Price Rs. 5/.

*INDIA AND CHINA* : By Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Hind Kitabs. Bombay.

Price Rs. 6/-

C. E. M. JOAD, in his "Counter Attack from the East" where he discusses Radhakrishnan's philosophy with an enthusiastic appreciation, characterizes him as the liaison officer between the East and the West : "It is as a philosophical bilinguist that while interpreting the traditional wisdom of the East to compose the current distractions of the West, he brings the force and energy of the West to vitalize the apathy of the East." Joad has but stated what is universally accepted as a fact. None indeed is better equipped for the task in the present-day India than Radhakrishnan. And he has been faithfully performing this self-imposed task for very many years past through his writings and lectures and addresses to public bodies. Some of these latter have now been collected and presented in neatly printed volumes to the public by the above two enterprising publishing firms of Western India. But for their enterprise these valuable addresses might have remained buried in the columns of newspapers.

*Education, Politics and War* contains 24 such addresses and, so far as the subjects named in their relation to present-day India are concerned, they will be found illuminating in their respective presentations. A perusal of the entire volume is needed for a full appreciation of its contents. A few passages, culled at random, may, however, serve the purpose of introducing the readers to Radhakrishnan's views on subjects of living interest to us at the present time. Speaking on Education and Spiritual Freedom at an Educational Conference at Cheltenham in 1937, when the world was seemingly at peace, he pointed out : "The condition of our times is similar to the India of Buddha or the Greece of Pericles with its weakening of traditional authority and rise of self-conscious egoism. If we are not to fall away into the subjectivism and anarchy of thought and morals of the Sophists, we have to attain to the spiritual individualism and freedom of Buddha or a Socrates. If we are to launch the world afresh, we must set up a new ideal of spiritual life. The scattered elements of knowledge and the detached specialism require the subtle alchemy of spirit to transform them into wisdom." Speaking at another such Conference in India half a dozen years later, with the whole world in convulsion, he follows up the strain : "This feverish age, where life is lived at the highest pressure, teaches us, that while it is necessary to perfect the intellect, it is even more necessary to refine the spirit. If the present world convulsion is to emerge in a new and better world order, we must acquire a living faith in love and wisdom. Here again, the Orient, with its distinctive message of wisdom in education, of the need for quiet, the quiet not of inaction but of harmony, of faith in the ultimates which shine through the vast uncertainties hanging over the march of life, can offer a corrective to the miscarriage of the world. The world is one family and its brotherhood of the future should be based on heart and mind and not on chains and fear." In politics, Radhakrishnan is a believer in Democracy "not because it is a fine political arrangement" but because to him it is "the highest religion." In his opinion, the failure of the communists is due to their not being sufficiently democratic. He has however a good word to say about the Congress Socialists "who are pledged to non-

violence and democracy." and he differentiates them from other Socialists because "they ( the Congress Socialists ) want a Socialism which does not fetter the civil liberties of the individual." He warns us from adopting highly revolutionary doctrines from outside as they might result in reducing India to a cockpit of warring creeds : "It is essential for us to develop on our own foundations and not copy the doctrines and ideologies of other countries " A year before the war started, he had declared, "If we wish to make it impossible for any nation to grab what it wants by force, we must make it possible for every nation to achieve what is just without force." And this is what he feels constrained to utter after four years of war : "If the military victory is to be followed by a post-war period of noble professions and craven deeds, as it happened in the last war, the enormous price we pay for it, will be paid in vain and it will be a sacrifice of the best for the worst."

*India and China* consists of seven selected addresses delivered in China by Radhakrishnan during his brief visit there in 1944 at the invitation of the Chinese Government. There is besides a fairly lengthy introduction contributed by himself for this particular edition which has a distinct value of its own apart from the addresses proper. These addresses will give the reader a true measure of his knowledge in Chinese lore which indeed is as wide as it is deep and penetrating. In his first address at the welcome Banquet, he dwells on the relations between China and India—relations established mainly through the movement of scholars between the two countries from the sixth century B. C. to the eleventh century A. D. followed by a lull owing to political vicissitudes in both countries, till it was revived in the twentieth century by the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to China in 1924, followed up, we might add, by that of Jawaharlal Nehru and Radhakrishnan himself on one side, and on the other by the visits to India of Marshal and Madame Chiang Kai Shek, Dr. Tai Chi-tao, Dr. Ku and others. "All these centuries we have met as friends and comrades in the pursuit of learning and the cultivation of virtue and not as rivals and exploiters. Our civilizations which are of great antiquity and of unbroken continuity possess a common cultural and spiritual background. They have similar ideals of human life and fellowship. On the political plane our relations have been a unique example of good-neighbourly behaviour. We have not suffered from the distrust and fear of the foreigner." About the three prevalent religious systems in China, namely Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, it is interesting to follow Radhakrishnan in his thesis that the three systems instead of antagonising do but complement each other : "If Confucianism in its later forms serves as a religion it is because its social emphasis was backed by a spiritual faith. The satisfaction of the metaphysical need and the spiritual aspirations of man was secured by the acceptance of the religious postulates of Jainism and Buddhism." In the last address which was delivered before an audience composed of "distinguished leaders in the diplomatic field and earnest students of international affairs," Radhakrishnan presents a comprehensive review of the war and fearlessly, though with complete dispassion, tackles the problem of world security. This lengthy address is well-documented and is an intellectual treat to read. And who is there in these days, unwise enough not to agree with his finding, or heed his warning : "If we love peace, if we wish to shorten the agony, if the military victories are to be swifter and their cost less terrible, the allies should use the political arm in unison and

strength. If they now and here declare that they will maintain and guarantee the independence of all small states, including the Balkan States, of all dependencies and colonies, the policies of the latter would swing into a new channel and even the Axis Powers may sue for peace. Have we the vision and the courage, the strength and the spirit of sacrifice for this great achievement?"

The volume has been very well edited. The addresses contain copious footnotes; there are seven appendices and an Index. All these go to make the volume a valuable addition to the reference library of any publicist in any part of the world.

K. G.

*BEST STORIES OF MODERN BENGAL*: Volume One · Edited by Dilip K.

Gupta and translated by Nilima Devi. Published by The Signet Press,

Calcutta. Price—Rs. 5. War Surcharge Re. 1/12/-

A GREAT literature by reason of its wide human appeal breaks through narrow geographical barriers. The living voice of a people speaks through its literature and to an ever-onlarging audience. And nowhere does the nation's pulse throb so distinctly as in its short stories. There one sees the nation as it lives and loves, hates and fights, smiles and weeps.

The development of Bengali short story during the last quarter of a century has been phenomenal. Although Rabindranath Tagore dominated till the end of his life the entire field of Bengali literature, including that of short stories, we notice as early as 1925 the emergence of a band of young writers who had drunk deep in the springs of continental literature and at the same time were keenly alive to the changing conditions within the country itself. These talented young men, whose advent into the arena was welcomed by Rabindranath himself, immediately started bold experiments in this particular form of literature which gave proper scope to their contemporary awareness. The romantic tradition was seriously challenged by some who gave themselves out as stern realists. Some looked at life with the eyes of a hardened cynic, others with the objective outlook of a cold intellectual, and yet others kept loyal to the old romantic fervour. The total result was an enrichment of the language and literature, an extension of their scope and content and introduction of a vigour and vitality hitherto unknown.

Bengal's vast and varied contribution to literature has for some time past been attracting the attention of a large reading public outside Bengal. The Signet Press has done a signal service to the cause of Bengali literature by presenting some of the best stories of Modern Bengal to non-Bengali readers through an English translation of the same. The selection covers a wide range and would give, as Lin Yutang says, 'some intimate glimpses of Bengal life.' The translation, to say the least, is excellent in as much as it retains much of the interest and charm of the original. Translation is always a delicate and difficult task; and more so where the tone and feel of one language differs so widely as between Bengali and English. Nilima Devi deserves to be congratulated on the remarkable ease and felicity with which she has succeeded in her difficult task.

And what a beautiful production! It heartens a book-lover to come across such an excellently got-up publication in these days of acute paper shortage. We shall



naturally look forward to the companion volume, where we are promised we shall have 'not only stories written by the more celebrated and mature among the modern writers but also several of these written by the most promising of the rising generation.'

A feature of the present volume are the notes on the authors—vignettes which are studies in miniature and admirably assess the most salient characteristics of the individual authors.

K. Roy

*THE CHINESE EXODUS* : By Prof. J. C. Daruvala. Hind Kitabs,  
267, Hornby Road, Bombay. Price : Rs. 4/8/-

THE WRITER, PROF. J. C. DARUVALA, was a professor of Foreign Languages at the National Political Institute, Chungking, 1943-44. During his stay of six months there, he travelled widely in Free China, saw and observed at first hand the country and its people as they are today, and wrote down his impressions with the sympathetic understanding of an Asiatic.

The twelve chapters into which the book is divided cover a wide range :—China : Unity in Diversity ; the Kuomintang : Principles and Administration ; Economics, Currency and Inflation ; Agriculture, Food and Industries ; Education and the War ; Philosophy and Religion ; National Characteristics ; the Emancipation of Women ; the Generalissimo : his views ; The War and its effects ; Cultural Life and Thought ; The Future. Besides, there are five Appendices, two maps and five illustrations. The book is informative, and though the emphasis naturally is on conditions as in 1944, the author has given a brief survey of the whole history of China, of the country and the people. What we miss in the book is depth of observation and insight. It is a little too obvious that the author has culled most of his knowledge from the China Hand Book and other official documents. His information too seems to be rather one-sided. Though one can disagree with the other Chinese Parties and may even criticise them, one cannot leave them out of the picture in a book like this.

Appendices are useful, though brief. The one on 'the Chinese Languages' says that this language has no accent and not much of grammatical inflection,—which is incorrect. All the captions describing the illustrations are wrong, except the one on the frontispiece ; e. g. to face page 16, for "Reading a Scroll" read "Portraits of the God of Longevity, the God of Good Fortune and the God of Wealth and Emolument" ; to face page 17, for "The Goddess of Mercy" read "Avalokitesvara" ; to face page 32, for "Emperor and Attendant" read "General K'uan Yu and Chou Tsang of the Three Kingdoms."

Despite these minor defects, the book is well worth reading. Indian readers will find it both interesting and informative.

Divakaropadhyaya

**PREMCHAND : By Madan Gopal.**

The Bookabode, 119, Circular Rd., Lahore, 1944.

HERE is a delectable and breezy little introduction, written in English, to the genius of Munshi Premchand. Since Premchand served the apprenticeship of his craft in the school of life, a study of his works naturally plunges us into the mighty stream of our lives and times. This small book which purports to cover so wide a range is a daring venture, the merit of which should be appraised not by the achievement but by the endeavour. The bibliography of books by and on Premchand appended at the end of this study will prove very useful to all readers. We look forward to the appearance of an elaborate and critical study of Premchand, by the author, of which he has held out a promise.

M. Bajpai.

**AND ONE DID NOT COME BACK : By Khwaja Ahmad Abbas.**

Sound Magazine ( Publication Dept. ) Sir P. M. Road, 1944. Price : Rs. 2/8/-

THIS thrilling tale of the Indian Congress Medical Mission to China is so vividly and realistically told that we feel as though we had actually witnessed the perilous events that took place in the war-torn and blood-smeared China, during the five Indian doctors' sojourn there. India's sympathy and noble sentiment by sending this medical mission to China has touched the hearts of the Chinese people and won their lasting gratitude. This gesture of good will does not merely serve as a symbol of revival of the old acquaintance, but at the same time creates a new and closer comradeship between the two age-old sister nations, India and China. Dr. Kotnis, who offered his life to the noble cause of China, which is also the cause of justice and world peace, is known in China as *Chungkao Haitzu*—son of China. His death is one more link between India and China. Mr. Abbas deserves to be congratulated for having written this excellent book.

Fachow.

**SOVIET ASIA : THE POWER BEHIND U. S. S. R. By K. S. Hirlekar.**Foreword by Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Published by Avanti Prakashan,  
Bombay, 14. Sole distributors : Padma Publications Ltd. , Bombay.

THIS book contains a graphic presentation of the rapid march of a backward people towards power and material well-being. There are some good maps which help the reader in following the descriptions, and the tables of figures give us a sense of precision as also of objectivity of study, which the author seems to claim as his method. His claim is not unjust, though he has not wholly concealed his great enthusiasm for the Moscow experts whom he quotes abundantly. The purpose of this book is mainly to inform ; propaganda, if it is there at all, is very subtle and pardonable. We are impressed by the vast achievements of the people of the 'Heartland'—Northern Russia and Siberia ; we see rapid developments in agriculture and industry, education and health, and above all, in national consciousness. The author is constantly telling us

how behind all these developments there works the planned economy of the Soviet Government, how the centrifugal and centripetal forces are balanced, and unity in diversity achieved. The problem of the different races and languages is solved by means of a thoroughly generous and long-sighted principle of equality and freedom. The author writes on page 22; "The very *raison d'être* of this volume is to make our countrymen realise how determined the directors of Soviet economy have been to develop this "heartland". He also expresses the view in the Introduction that India can learn much from an objective study of the Russian enterprise. We agree to this, but certainly we cannot go so far as to appreciate the lines on the flap—"The revaluation of life's aims and ambitions which the central Asian peoples have learnt from the Moscow experts is a wonderful phenomenon which has a deep meaning for India." We can only concede that the phenomenon is suggestive. We believe that India's problem is very different in many respects and her aims and aspirations are very often confused with those of the so-called progressive countries that cannot see a way out of recurring wars. The printing and get-up of the book are excellent. So are the illustrations.

P. J. C.

*UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN INDIA* · Past and Present. By Anathnath Basu.

The Book Emporium Ltd. August, 1944. PP. VIII+166+XLVII :

Price Rs. 4/-

SREEJUT ANATHNATH BASU is the head of the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University and is undoubtedly one of the most competent authorities to write on University Education in India. The book under review, however, is not intended to be as thorough and comprehensive as its name would suggest. It is, as the author says in the preface, only a "bird's-eye view of the development of university education in this country." His main purpose has been "to survey specially the growth of modern Indian Universities and also to study some of their major problems."

In the ten chapters of the book the author maintains a fairly logical scheme. The first chapter gives a very brief account of the ancient and medieval Indian Universities, thereby setting up an appropriate background for the study of the modern period. The next eight chapters trace the history of university education in India upto the present. In the tenth or the last chapter the author considers some of the basic problems of Indian university education. There he enunciates that, "the major functions of a university are, conservation of learning, interpretation of learning and advancement of learning." With this end in view he pleads for "the autonomy of our universities", and for "ample State-aid". "But," he adds, "if the State is to grant freedom and funds, the universities too, in their turn, must organise their work properly; they must be careful that they do not waste public funds or abuse their liberty. . . . A university is the custodian of the culture of a nation" ( p. 145 ).

The book closes with five ( A-E ) appendices of relevant extracts from several important official documents which are not easily accessible to lay readers, a 'selected'

Bibliography, and two tables—one on 'Universities in India', taken from the Eleventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India 1937-42, and another on 'Enrolment in Universities in India 1911-42', taken from the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-war Educational Development in India.

The author seems to have imposed upon himself a rather rigid rule when we hear him say : "Nor have I included in it ( the book ) the Indian Women's University of Bombay, the Visvabharati of Santiniketan, the Kasi Vidyapith of Benares and similar other institutions, because their degrees and diplomas are not recognised and they were not created either by acts of legislatures or by regulations promulgated by authorities which have a constitutional status with the Government of India" ( chap. IX. pp. 105-6 ). Has it not the effect of stultifying much of his serious remarks in course of the book, especially those in chapters V and X ? A brief account, or even a proper mention of them in an additional section of the appendix would surely have thrown a few significant rays on the State-acknowledged University Education in India, and would have helped to reveal it in its true perspective.

One word more ; "The Imperial Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa" ( see page 117, last line ) is now a myth. It was transferred, or should we say 'transplanted', from there long before the publication of this book, and is now at 'New Pusa' in Delhi.

Nirmalchandra Chattopadhyaya.

*THE GANDHIAN PLAN* : By S. N. Agarwal ; Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi.  
Padma Publications, Ltd., Bombay, 1944.

THE name of the book is slightly misleading for the plan does not emanate from Gandhiji ;—although, as he makes it clear in his brief Foreword, there is nothing in the book contrary to his ideas. But this is somewhat of a negative qualification.

The brochure consists of three distinct parts. The first, covering some 53 pages, is an excellent dissertation on the theoretical background of Gandhian economics. The author has a lucid style and uses numerous quotations with dexterity. Even if one does not agree with the thesis presented, this part of the book is worth reading.

The second part is somewhat scrappy and covers jottings of what the author deems necessary in different fields of economic and social planning. This part merely gives an idea of the many-sidedness of our economic problem.

The third and last part, or what is really such, begins from page 104 and covers only the last eleven pages. There the author sums up his proposals in terms of financial outlay and sources of income. He envisages an expenditure of some 3,500 crores and is apologetic of this small figure which he has not been able to exceed in view of India's poverty.

The main thesis underlying the plan is that instead of a world economy in which raw materials and finished products are carried forward and backward over long distances, we should go back to village economy where each region produces most of the necessities for itself and exports only the surplus. This principle, when once accepted and acted upon, could reduce competition from markets and economise the national expenditure on transport and distribution.

The proposal is certainly logical but can hardly be practised under a laissez-faire regime with expanding facilities of transport. In olden times this was actually the practice because transport was difficult. So if we are to adopt this principle now we shall have to arrange for a government agency artificially enforcing such restrictions as had been enforced naturally by the absence of transport in bygone times. And this involves a restriction of freedom of the individual and control by a central agency which the Gandhian Plan does not favour. How then is the aim to be achieved? In other words, decentralization was the natural outcome of a particular level of material culture. And if it is to be achieved in the present day of aeroplanes and wireless, such decentralization will have to be enforced and maintained through a central agency. It is wrong to believe that centralization was altogether the outcome of government policy; it would be more correct to say that it was inventions such as the railways and telegraphs, which led to the growth of centralization.

Dr. H. Amir Ali.

*YOUR FOOD*: By M. R. Masani. Tata Studies in Current Affairs. Published for Tata Sons Limited by Padma Publications Ltd, Bombay.

Price : One rupee.

FOOD is the most vital necessity of life. Man can do without most other things, but not without food. Nature has not provided food for him free and abundant as the air he breathes. He has to struggle for it. He must also know what to eat and why. When food is plentiful and can be easily bought for a few coins, we just don't think about it. But the war and the attendant famine have forced us to ask many questions. Why haven't we enough to eat in India? Is the soil of India poor and barren, or are we too many mouths to feed? How much does a man need to eat to keep him healthy and active? Why do our people fall so easy a victim to disease? Why can't our people be as well nourished, healthy and energetic as people in some other countries are? These are natural questions which every young boy and girl must ask. But the answers are not so easily available. Our school texts tell us all about the virtues of the Tudors and the vices of the Stuarts in England, but precious little about the vital problems of our own people. The Tatas have therefore earned public merit in sponsoring this excellent and useful publication. They could not have got a better writer to write it than the author of *Our India*. He has a gift of lucid exposition, of explaining difficult and dull details in a simple, homely and chatty style which immediately holds one's attention. He knows how to keep the essential and eliminate the unessential. These are rare gifts for our Indian writers, most of whom tend to be prolix and pedantic. We hope this book will be eagerly taken up as a text book in our schools and will also be translated in the different Indian languages, so as to reach the widest possible circle of readers. It tells us things which every one, young and old, should know, and tells them in a way which few can tell. It is decently got-up and profusely illustrated. Our only criticism is that the illustrations are disappointing when we recall the excellent illustrations in the author's previous book, *Our India*. It would have been worth while for the Tatas, in the interest of their great name, to have spent more generously on the illustrations and the general get-up of the book.

K. K.

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# A FRIEND

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

[ This charming tribute to Sir William Rothenstein, whose death was announced on February 14, was originally written in 1912 and first published in *Bharati* ( 1319, *Kartik* ). It has been translated from the original Bengali by Kshitish Roy. ]

ON reaching London I took shelter in a hotel. It was as if I found myself in the crowded gateway of moving traffic. What transpired inside remained a mystery, nor was acquaintance possible with the inmates. I just watched the people—coming and going. All I could see was that there was no end of hurry and bustle. What the business was about passed my comprehension. I knew not if anybody kept count of the impact of all this colossal bustle—for good or for bad.

The gong goes. Inside the dining room I find groups of men and women, in twos and threes, sitting round their small tables and noiselessly eating their food while the tall, solemn-faced waiter hastens from one table to another, serving with dexterous hands. Some finish their newspaper along with their meal, then dart a swift glance at their pocket watch, put on their hat and sally forth. The room grows empty. They get together only during lunch or dinner hour ; then vanish, no one knows where.

Although I do not need to look at it, I too pull out the watch like everybody else, snap it open and then quietly put it back into my pocket. When it is neither meal-time nor time to retire, the hotel looks like a boat moored, and one is at a loss to explain one's presence therein during these hours. The hotel is a fit place for those who have their work to go to and no place to live in. A bazaar residential arrangement like this is not quite suitable for such superfluous persons as I. As I stand by the open window I find streams of people running in various directions. They seem to me to be so many tools in the hands of an invisible mechanic. What is being forged remains likewise invisible, on the whole. It is like a colossal factory where history is being manufactured, where millions of hammers strike at a million different spots with swift and terrific blows. I stand outside this giant engine and see the living pistons, propelled by the steam of hunger, moving up and down with an indomitable energy.



Foreigners who come here for the first time cannot escape this first impression of the huge human machine of the god of history. What heat, what clamour ! How the wheels revolve ! If I shut my eyes for a while and try to form an idea of all the labour and all the movement that constitute this city of London, what terrible persistence ! Nobody knows to what end is this incessant drive, what latent power is in the process of being made manifest.

But one cannot keep on seeing man only as a machine. If I cannot see the *man* in him, why did I come all this way ? It is of course much easier to see him as a cog in the wheel than as he is by himself. Unless he takes you of his own accord into the inner compartments of his mind, you cannot gain admission to the essential man. It is not so simple as buying a ticket to a theatre. You cannot gain that admission for any price—simply because it is priceless.

Luckily for me I got that one rare chance. I came by a friend. There are some who are born friends. It does not lie with all of us to be so. In order to become a true friend one has to give oneself. As in the case of other charities, this gift presupposes a fund to draw upon. Mere wish to give is not enough.

The friend I was talking of is a famous artist ; his name is William Rothenstein. In India I had met him for a brief while. As a matter of fact at the time of setting out for Europe I had felt attracted by the prospect of coming closer to him. The moment I met him I felt as if in a trice I had crossed over the gateway of the hotel. Now there was nothing to stop me.

He lived at Hampstead Heath. The place was a green mound and looked like the heaving breast of London. In the backyard of his house nestling against the slope of the hill was a strip of a garden. Facing the garden was a long verandah attached to the drawing room, half-hidden by a rose creeper and rapturous with the fragrance of many flowers. According as my fancy took me, I sat in the verandah with a book in hand which I hardly ever read. I felt happier to watch his three children play—two boys and a girl. Their childish joy was infectious.

The path from the strange to the familiar is a long and arduous one. I had hardly the time to traverse the entire course. My capacity, too, was limited. Habitually shy, I recoiled from the thought of muscling my way to the desired goal. Besides I did not hold the key

wherewith to unlock the main entrance to the English language. It was a hurdle race for me. Such a process is too much of a strain and does not help one to be true to one's nature. Unless one can express oneself without let or hindrance, one cannot get to know the real and true self of another. And so after a while, tired of trying to dodge the monstrous wheels of the mechanised traffic, I would have at last traced my way back to my Bengal, nestling in the embrace of her rivers, that flow by the green paddy fields glistening in the autumn sun. When my mind was at such a pass in came my friend. He raised the screen and I saw the light burning and a seat kept ready for me. I left the dead-weight of the foreigner's strangeness outside the door, discarded the dust-laden coat of the traveller, and passed in a moment from the hustle of the crowd into the intimacy of a home.



# THE POST-WAR PLANNING FOR INDIA

( *With special reference to the Bombay Plan* )

By Prof. GYANCHAND

THE *London Times* in a leader made the following comment on the Bombay Plan recently : "Comparison between the enthusiasm, which greeted the first part of the Plan on its publication about twelve months ago and the almost perfunctory reception accorded to the final instalment provide the measure of the advance of public opinion during the interval—an advance for which the authors are themselves entitled to due credit", and attributes the contrast to the fact that "the Bombay Planners no longer possess the monopoly of economic revelation, there are other and competing versions". But the fact that there are other and competing versions itself shows that the avowed object of the Plan—i.e., to provide a basis of discussion and stimulate thinking on the economic future of the country—has been fulfilled in a large measure. The Plan was published at a time when the country not only was, as it is now, in a state of political stalemate, but constructive thought had practically been suspended and mental negation was the outstanding feature of the life of our nation. We are still living in a repressive atmosphere ; and considering that we are passing through one of the most critical periods of human history, most of what is being said and written to-day is singularly unfruitful from the long-term point of view. In spite of this there is perceptible a change in the mental climate of the country and the people are showing signs of the stirring of a new life which is likely to take a definite form as soon as the Ordinance rule is relaxed and the forces now held in check are given a chance to express themselves. In this process of revival "the enthusiasm which greeted the first part of the plan" was a very clear portent—an indication of the faith in the country's possibilities and future in spite of our dismal present.

The war has laid bare the fundamental weakness of our national life. It has shown in a gruesome way the absence of physical, economic and spiritual reserves. The appalling loss of life in Bengal and some other parts of the country and the inability of the Government and the people to tackle the problems created by the war is a measure of our resourcelessness—our utter lack of means and ability to face up to the problems of a major crisis of our national life. We cannot afford to drift any longer or let the future take care of itself.

A concerted effort on a truly grand scale has become an imperative necessity by the stress of events, and a fast developing international situation greatly re-inforces the need for our becoming masters of our own faith—of planning the economic and social development of our people.

For an all-round concerted effort we need a community of purpose, driving power to carry out the purpose with determination and will, and must know how to forge an instrument for producing results commensurate with our needs. Planning needs skill, knowledge and insight ; i.e., it cannot be carried out without utilizing the service of experts at all stages of planned development. But the primary condition of the introduction and successful execution of any plan worth the name must be a nation-wide appreciation of its importance and meaning and the willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to insure its success. Soviet Russia has achieved wonders during and before the war, but in spite of the totalitarian character of the regime under which these results have been achieved, it is clear that essentially in this one sixth of the world a magnificent co-operative effort has been put forth and millions of men and women have worked together in a superb common enterprise for a great and inspiring purpose. Force has been used in Soviet Russia and there are indications that it has at times been used in excess, even if it is granted that force is "the midwife of revolution". But men driven by terror can never achieve a fraction of what the Russians have achieved. For that social vision, a great faith and readiness to subordinate small personal ends to a "purpose greater than ourselves" are absolutely essential and without these the Russians could not possibly have come through the ordeals which the Fate set them before and during the war with such credit and glory. We in India need not—as a matter of fact cannot—reproduce the sequence of events which has made Soviet Russia what she is to-day—not only one of the three Great Powers but a beacon of light and a source of inspiration to progressive forces all over the world. All the same we can take to heart the lessons of Russian experience and the most important of these is that planning is and must be a great adventure for a country, has to be a common task for the whole nation and cannot be carried out without the whole-hearted co-operation and unremitting effort of the people. In India also for planning we have to

create a new spirit, mobilize our human, even more than our material, resources and fill our people with a passionate desire to surpass our highest achievements of the past and with a vision of the future unfolding itself in a series of targets, each higher than the one that is reached or realized. This is the essence of the Bombay Planners' plea for the establishment of a National Government vested with full freedom. Their plea is not a political slogan. It is based upon understanding of the essentials of planning and has, of course, to be acted upon if we have to evolve a plan which will really fire the imagination of our people and give them courage and strength to face and solve its difficult and complicated problems. Planning, it has to be clearly appreciated, is not merely a job for the experts and we cannot get on with it without evoking and harnessing the best and the highest that our people are capable of for the execution of the plan.

Planning raises difficult issues of ideology which the authors of the Bombay Plan meet by declaring themselves in favour of "the middle way"—of an economy and an order in which private enterprise will be controlled and regulated but not hampered or unduly circumscribed in the service of the community. There is a very good case for this view if its full implications are clearly understood. Violence, even if it is regarded as a necessary evil in this imperfect world, as an instrument of social change, is a double-edged weapon. It hurts its users as much as its victims, and in India there are specially grave risks in relying upon it to any considerable extent owing to the latent conflicts of our national life because of the division not only of economic, but also of territorial and communal, interests. Violence may set up a furnace in which these differences may be melted and fused but there is, in the present circumstances, greater chance of these differences being accentuated rather than liquidated by an ill-considered appeal to force. Fundamental changes are unavoidable if really worth-while changes are to be brought about, but extreme measures are likely to defeat themselves if they are resorted to without regard for the reactions which they are likely to call forth. Social antagonisms have, therefore, to be avoided as far as possible and changes that are necessary have to be introduced without recourse to violence.

The authors of the Plan do not however seem to be aware of,

or at least they do not underline, the one essential condition for the avoidance of the use of extreme measures. Experience has shown that these are forced upon the advocates of basic social changes by the blind clinging to their anti-social privileges by the men in power for the continuance of their dominant position. The Marxist view that it is not possible to replace the hierarchy of property-owners by democracy of worth and merit merely by appeal to reason is based upon the assumption that the rich identify their own interests with those of the community and protect the former in the name of the latter by using their legal, economic and political powers without any regard for the interest of the masses. The Bombay Planners belong to and represent what is commonly known as big business ; and though they seek to disarm suspicion and opposition by professing progressive views they have not been able to meet the criticism that their position and actions belie their avowed intentions of having put forward their plan primarily in the interest of the community. They, taken together, hold what amounts to a semi-monopolistic position in our industrial system and are busy strengthening and consolidating it by acquiring control of new industrial concerns, financial agencies and the press. It is true that monopoly of foreign capital in key positions of our economic life is still there and has to be replaced by truly Indian control, but monopoly of foreign capital cannot be counteracted by building up monopolistic control of Indian economic life by a few families but by dealing with the problem of monopolies as a whole and realising the benefits of integration by measures of co-ordination under public control. If the adoption of extreme measures is to be avoided and recourse to force prevented, it can be done only by the willingness of landed, financial and industrial vested interests to forego their privileges and powers, and of this willingness they have given no indication in practice or in the memoranda of the Bombay Planners.

The Bombay Planners are for extension of state enterprise and state control in various forms. They state the view that owing to state intervention in various spheres of economic activity and the introduction of payment according to the quantity and quality of work in Soviet Russia, "the distinction between capitalism and socialism has lost much of its significance from the practical standpoint." In India, as in other countries of the world, it is necessary

to seek a way out of the existing confusion and frustration by adopting an empirical approach and avoiding fanatical insistence on doctrinaire formulas and theories. A great deal can be done to increase production and realise economic and social justice by effective control of production, distribution, consumption, investment, foreign trade and exchange, wages and working conditions and steeply graduated taxation. These are the measures which the Bombay Planners rely upon to develop and transform our economic system. But every thing would depend upon the spirit in which the control is exercised, i.e., upon making well-being of the community the decisive consideration on all crucial points. Private enterprise has, as they point out in their memorandum, to be really enterprising, i.e., it has to blaze new trails and not merely stand for the status-quo and seek to maintain it by becoming or remaining the real power behind the throne. State control, when the state is practically in the hands of the propertied classes, means public control for private ends, and all compromise formulas would, in that case, only promote private interests through the exercise of public authority, and common-weal will only become a cover for private greed. The essence of socialism is that it should enlist ability and character for maximising social welfare, and so long as men in power, whether in public or private sector of economic life, owe their position to their property rights and exercise the power in the interest of property and privilege, no real planning in the interest of the community is possible. Just as patriotism is the last argument of the least patriotic men, social good is being made by the capitalists all over the world a reason for consolidation of their own position after the war.

Personality is one of the supreme values of life but it cannot be realized by will to power or concentration upon the pursuit of selfish ends. Decentralized initiative is necessary for progress, freedom and flexibility of the economic system, but decentralization in which economic life becomes an outlet for acquisitive impulses can only breed conflict and lead to centralization in the hands of private interests for anti-social ends. The Bombay Planners reveal a lack of understanding of the fundamental importance of economic factors in quoting with approval the well-known view of J. M. Keynes according to which "dangerous human proclivities are canalized into comparatively harmless channels by the

existing opportunities of money-making and private wealth." If the mainspring of economic activities is to be relentless pursuit of personal ends—particularly for men at the top—there is no chance of a planned economy being brought into operation which will serve the highest interests of the community. The choice is not, as Keynes suggests, between tyrannizing over bank-balance and tyrannizing over fellow-citizens, but bank-balance, i. e., surplus wealth of the community, being used for tyrannizing over fellow-citizens or for developing the moral and material resources of the country. Gravamen of the charge against capitalism is that this surplus is at present unfairly acquired and ruthlessly used for, to use Keynes's words, "reckless pursuit of personal power and authority and other forms of self-aggrandizement," for exploitation of man by man, which can only be put an end to by changing the social centre of gravity, by transferring power from those who have to those who know and can build a social common-wealth in the real sense of the word. The Bombay Planners are unaware of this all-important need and make no provision for its satisfaction.

Finance has in the Bombay Plan been given a secondary role. This is as it should be. If the inwardness of Lord Wavell's words, quoted in Part I of the Plan, that money has to be found on the scale for fighting the evils of peace—poverty, lack of education, unemployment, ill-health—on which it has been forthcoming during the war, is understood, it is clear that money is not the thing. For planning we need men, materials, organization and ever-growing social purpose, and not finance. Financing agencies essentially are and really should be agencies for deciding proportions in which the wealth of the community should be used for development and current consumption and for account-keeping,—for clearing counter claims and recording and comparing social costs and total output and output of particular industries. In India income of the community being limited owing to low level at which production is being carried on, the task of earmarking the proportion to be used for investment—for improving the material equipment of the country—is bound to be a very difficult one. But if investment control is to be effective and financial agencies are to perform their other functions well, it is absolutely essential that these agencies should be state-owned and state-managed. The Bombay Planners are for public ownership of public-utility enter-



prises. All financial institutions—banks, insurance companies, investment trusts and all other similar institutions—are primarily and essentially public-utility undertakings in the truest sense of the word. To-day in this country, as in other countries, they are being used for magnifying the powers of the propertied classes manifold by placing at their disposal savings of the people which they use to increase their power without any regard for public interests. In India these institutions are few and weak but they cannot be made numerous, sound and strong from the social standpoint unless they are regarded as public-utility undertakings and made public institutions. The fact that they are relatively undeveloped in this country makes it all the more necessary for the community to make finance its own function and discharge it to promote public good. Finance will remain master of the community and never become its servant and instrument, as the Bombay Planners want it to be, as long as it remains a private enterprise—i. e., so long as savings and credit institutions exist for and serve private ends.

It is not possible to examine critically financial estimates of the Bombay Plan. All plans and their figures at this stage are bound to be tentative. Their real utility is illustrative, i. e., they indicate the magnitude of the problem and the relative importance of the different elements in it. The Bombay Planners propose to spend Rs. 10,000 crores on the execution of their plan. This estimate was at first called astronomical and fantastic, but it is now becoming increasingly clear that as a measure of our needs the estimate is, if anything, modest ; it is unduly cautious rather than over-ambitious. Since the publication of Part I of the Plan, plans involving expenditure of hundreds of crores on specific objects have become the order of the day, and by the time the Government of India, the Provinces and the States complete and publish their plans, the total estimated expenditure on planning is likely to exceed rather than fall short of the Bombay estimate. Whatever the value of these estimates from the practical standpoint—and that is very little—the Bombay Planners have rendered a very useful service in educating public opinion. They have helped us to size-up our needs in an adequate manner and made us realize that the gravity and urgency of the situation makes it essential for us to be imaginative and bold in thought and action. If we are going to raise our 400 millions from their sub-human level of

existence to a level worth working for, it is going to be a stupendous undertaking and we must not be deterred by the magnitude of the task from undertaking it. India and the world are not going to be short of resources for the regeneration of humanity. The problem is a problem of will and not of money. Finance, if we know how to use it, is going to be, it has to be repeated, a secondary problem.

This of course does not mean that finance is not important. It is a means by which our resources have to be husbanded and utilized to the greatest advantage. This is the reason why it has been emphasized that public ownership and management of financial institutions is of vital importance. But otherwise also it is essential that the use of wrong methods of finance should be avoided. This consideration is specially relevant with regard to two methods supported by the Bombay Planners. They suggest that we should finance development by foreign borrowing to the extent of Rs. 700 crores and secondly propose to provide Rs. 3,000 crores by "creating" money. The first suggestion revives the painful associations of what India, like other politically weak and backward countries, has suffered at the hands of high finance ; and as our political position is far from assured, the danger of increasing the hold of foreign interests over our economic life by letting in more capital is a real one and has to be provided against. There is nothing wrong in raising foreign loans, but political complications, which the Bombay Planners want to avoid, will arise unless we are extremely careful with regard to the manner and methods of raising these loans. Reading between the lines one gets an impression that the Bombay Planners expect to avoid political complications by borrowing for development from the U.S.A. rather than from Great Britain. But in this respect, as in all others, we stand nothing to gain by playing off Uncle Sam against John Bull ; and it is likely that if we try the game, we shall end up by finding ourselves in the grip of Yankee John Bull Ltd instead of improving our position or working out our economic emancipation. Any further private investment of foreign capital in the country is fraught with grave risks and has to be avoided at all costs ; and this is the more necessary in cases in which its investment takes place in the name of Indo-British or Indo-American co-operation. It can never be co-operation of equals ; it will be collaboration in the rather disreputable sense in which the word has come to be

used during the war. That will, it need not be said, do us no good. Sir Feroz Khan's plea for fifty-fifty is a plea for economic servitude. There is real danger that industrialists in this country will be taken in by this kind of argument and prejudice seriously the economic development of the country. The reports are current which seem to have factual basis, according to which it appears that several such deals are contemplated or have already been struck. If this is so, the deals must be regarded as acts of betrayal from the wider standpoint, in spite of substantial private gains which they are sure to bring to the industrialists concerned. The Bombay Planners have, in the interest of the Plan, to repudiate such intentions and declare their position with regard to this kind of co-operation in clear terms.

This, however, does not rule out real co-operation if we can get it. India will need foreign assistance in the form of technical advice, skill, guidance and investment. The enlightened self-interest of highly developed countries requires that such assistance should be made freely available without attaching to it terms which they themselves would not accept if they were in our position ; and such assistance should be offered with full knowledge and cognizance of our own Government and through it. The Government should prepare schemes, like power development schemes, soil conservation schemes or irrigation schemes—as a matter of fact all schemes in which public interest is paramount—and try to negotiate for international assistance in various forms, including the grant of long-term loans on terms fully compatible with our national self-government and without the slightest risk of mortgaging our future. The best agency with which such negotiations can be carried on would be an institution like the International Bank provided for in the Brettonwood Agreement. Until such agreement can be concluded and we are in a position to safeguard our future, safety lies in depending upon our own resources and using them to the greatest advantage. It is as a matter of fact necessary to go further and buy up all foreign interests that there are in the country. One of the best uses to which we can put our sterling balances is to draw upon them for repatriation of foreign capital in this country. Its amount does not exceed £ 300 to £ 400 millions and we will have the means, when we have the necessary power, to acquire them and thereby remove one of the most fundamental causes of our economic exploitation. These interests

would have been easily acquired during the war if India had been in a position of other countries. Britain has had to sell foreign investments in a number of countries including the Dominions and would have had to adopt the same course in this country if our political status had not been what it is. Now that we are planning for the future on the assumption that India will be a free country, we have to make the acquisition of foreign economic interests an important item in economic schemes for post-war India.

The other suggestion for financing the country's economic development has given rise to even greater apprehension. "Created" money savours very much of inflation and as we have suffered and are suffering severely from inflation, a proposal for financing economic development to the extent of Rs. 3,000 crores by creating money naturally gives rise to fears of super-inflation. If creation of even 1,000 crores has meant appalling loss of life and a great deal more, creation of three times as much cannot but fill us with grave forebodings. The fears are intelligible and may turn out to be well-founded, but it is not inevitable that creation of money for economic development should have the same results as war-time inflation has had in this country. Inflation in countries like the U. S. A., Great Britain and Germany has, during the war, been on a much greater scale than in this country and yet it is known that they have not suffered even to a small extent from the evils which have afflicted us in the last three years ; and the difference is due to the difference in the efficacy of war-time controls in this country and the other countries referred to above and, of course, to the difference in their attitude towards the war and ours. Apart from the question of the extent to which created money should be used for the execution of economic plans, the point that matters is that if we can get the people fully behind the Plan by convincing them that it has been conceived in their interest and there will be no chance of sectional interests enriching themselves at the expense of the community, i. e., if we can generate and sustain the right spirit towards the Plan and ensure adequate supply and fair distribution of essentials by rationing and price-control, creation of money in itself will not cause any serious dislocation of economic life. It has also to be realized that funds needed for what is called working capital do not and need not involve any saving on the part of the community. These funds are needed

for carrying production from one stage to another—from initial stages to final consumption and it is not necessary to draw upon the savings of the community—the surplus—for providing these funds. The question raises many technical issues and it is not possible to deal with them here. But substantially the position will be as stated above. The Bombay Planners have themselves exaggerated the dangers of this policy. They speak of individual liberty and freedom of enterprise suffering a temporary eclipse owing to the measures which will have to be adopted to bridge the gap between the volume of purchasing power in the hands of the people and the volume of goods available. A gap there will be but no eclipse of freedom need be feared on that account if the Plan has wide popular support and its execution is efficient and equitable. In this case again it is not the method of finance that matters but its animating purpose and popular reaction to it. Finance will become a camp-follower if the plan is really people's plan, in the sense that it is for their good and is based upon their confidence.

Besides finance there are some other cardinal points which may be dealt with briefly. The problem of distribution is vital and has been given its due importance in Part II of the Bombay Plan. It is important for two reasons. In the first place, if the benefits of economic development are mainly to accrue to the people at large it is necessary that additional income that is produced should very largely flow into their hands, i.e., they should get much greater purchasing power than they possess at present—greater both relatively and absolutely. The other reason which makes fairer distribution a matter of necessity is that without it it will not be possible to sell the goods that are produced. At present it is known that the extreme poverty of our people inhibits economic development because of the limitation of the purchasing power of the people. Vast increase of purchasing power in the hands of the masses is a necessary condition of the expansion of production. The avowed intention of the Plan being to raise the standard of living of the people, production has to be regulated with reference to the needs of the community in the relative order of importance—according to a social scale of priorities—and the people have to have the money to satisfy these essential needs. This end is, according to the Bombay Planners, to be realized by various means. Development of social services, by provision of schools, hos-

pitals, social insurance schemes, which cannot be done without levy of steeply graduated high taxation, will itself be a very important method of realizing this end. And the other should be fixing minimum rates of wages in industry and agriculture. The minimum may vary from industry to industry, but should in no case fall below the minimum needed for socially estimated essential needs. At the outset this end cannot be realized owing to the low level of production in the country. There is not enough wealth to go round for fixing an effective minimum. But this has to be a primary object of the Plan and extreme vigilance will be necessary to ensure that it is given in practice the importance which is its due. But a lower limit to income is in itself not enough. An upper limit has also to be fixed. Without the latter for a long time we will not have the resources to attain and maintain the minimum standard of living for our people; and fixing the upper limit has to be given its due place in any scheme of fair distribution. The Bombay Planners have admitted the need for minimum wages but do not appreciate that maximum limit is also a necessary condition of fixing the minimum. Graduated taxation should aim at setting a limit to the non-taxed income, but more direct measures of control of incomes would also be necessary and have to be embodied in our economic and social policy. Fixing of the lower and upper limits—of floor and ceiling—is for us an inescapable necessity and has to be squarely faced. Practical utility of any compromise formula that may be made the basis of planned economy in India is to be judged by the willingness of the richer classes to accept an outside limit to the aggregate individual income—i.e., income from all sources. Unless the range of inequality in this country is limited, practical difficulties in the way of realizing the object of the Plan will be almost insuperable.

From the point of view of distribution the question of small industries and handicrafts in our productive system is also important. Decentralized production is relied upon by the Bombay Planners as one of the measures for wide distribution of national income and is regarded as necessary to provide employment to millions of workers for whom there will be no place even in developed agriculture and industry. The question is, as is well known, even more fundamental and the points at issue have been set forth by Mr. S. N. Agarwal in his *The Gandhian Plan*. The issues are important and involve funda-

mental difference in the points of view. Power-production, i. e., large-scale production, cannot but mean, according to the Gandhian view, centralization of wealth and economic power, mechanization and therefore automatization of work, regimentation of workers, scramble for markets and raw-materials, continuance of deep-seated antagonism within and between nations, and because of them world-wars of even greater ferocity in the future. Socialization of production, according to this view, is no solution of the problem because socialization cannot avoid centralization of power and authority and must therefore mean dictatorship of individuals and parties—negation of economic, social and political democracy. Decentralization of production is therefore held to be necessary for humanised production, for making the producer master of his own life, for social harmony, for lasting peace and true and real democracy rooted in the everyday life of the people. Mahatma Gandhi's view that certain evils are inherent in industrialization and no amount of socialization can eradicate them is the basis of the above view. The issues being fundamental can only be discussed with reference to ultimate values and it is not possible to deal with them in a short paragraph which I can devote to this important question. The Bombay Planners do not share the Gandhian view and provide for handicrafts and small industries in their scheme only for affording employment and reducing the need for capital in the early stages of development. We in India are not in a position to make a free choice on this important point even if we get complete self-government and there are no political restrictions on our freedom of choice. All other countries of the world have either been industrialized or will be industrialized in the post-war period. The war has quickened the pace of industrialization and the events after the war will carry the process much farther. India cannot isolate herself and in order to come to and hold her own in the post-war world she will have to be equipped on a scale and upto the standard set by world forces. The Gandhian Plan admits the necessity of industrialization in basic industries and provides for their nationalization. These will be the key industries ; and if they are to be owned and operated by the State, the danger of centralization of authority and therefore dictatorship and the risk of our being drawn into the vortex of world conflicts will remain. The world has gone too far on the path of industrialization to retrace its steps,

and what is more, it does not want to. It proposes and means to keep to the same path and go ahead. But even in the sphere of consumption industries—industries producing goods of every-day use—we have to take world factors into account and acquire for ourselves a secure place in world economy. Industrialism cannot be scrapped, it has to be mastered, and though we have to recognise the difficulties of the task and obvious dangers that are looming ahead, we have also to realize that we cannot withdraw into our national shell to live a decentralized existence of our own. The simple and all-pervasive fact is that the way out is economic and social co-operation on a world scale or else disintegration and wholesale destruction of wealth, life and values will follow and darkness deeper than death supervene, if not all at once, by a succession of two or three stages. No one can be unduly optimistic about the outlook for international co-operation. The approaching end of the war is casting long and ominous shadows ahead and we cannot but heed their warning and temper our hopes with a realistic view of the existing situation and its possibilities.

The position, however, does not settle itself merely by taking note of the decisive importance of world factors. We have to keep in mind the social consequences of industrialism and devise methods by which it can become our servant rather than our master. Industrialism is not mechanization. Machines are made and used by men and the evils of industrialization are due to the failure of men and not of machines. The latter not only are made by men but are man's intelligence at work—his spirit which has by understanding nature learnt to use it for his ends. It is the ends that are at fault—it is the spirit which has mastered nature that has to acquire mastery over man. The problem is social and not technical, and technique of production should and can be used to free man for creative life at a high plane of existence. Power production is substitute for human power in order that man, who is essentially spiritual, may not continue to be the slave of unrelenting struggle for existence and his latent possibilities may be realized for self-expression and spiritual adventures in individual and social spheres. This is the faith of those who believe in mechanization as an instrument of freedom and progress and has inspired socialistic thought at its best. It is not a materialistic point of view. It is an affirmation and not a denial of the



highest values of life. It is a call to man to acquire self-mastery for mastering the technique of power production, and using it for the fulfilment of life and not its frustration. This process is, it is now clear, going to take time and involves profound social and therefore spiritual changes. In carrying it out we are up against the inertia of the men in power who are obsessed by their own interest and are resisting changes without which man's mastery over himself—i.e., his social relations and institutions—cannot be established. Hence class struggle and social strife and confusion in thought and practice owing to our inability to rise above the obsolete habits of thought and action. Realization of personality as the supreme value of life through introducing a new social purpose in production is being hampered by this social short-sightedness and the result is, as stated above, use of the power of knowledge and potentially fruitful technique for anti-social ends. Economic revolution is fundamentally a revolution of spirit—self-enlightenment on a grand scale in order that we may re-order our life—both individual and social—for the pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty.

Mechanization is, therefore, not a debasing ideal and can and should be ennobling. But as social adjustments necessary for making the most of it cannot be made all at once, we have to proceed with mechanization at a pace and in a manner as to avoid the infliction of unmerited misery on those who have so far relied mostly on the use of human power with the help of simple tools to earn their living and live their life on such meagre income as their work brings them. In other words, we must so mechanize our system of production that the change will not throw out of work millions of men for whom otherwise a different and better provision has not been made. Our craftsmen have suffered in the past untold misery by their exposure to the competition of machine-made goods from outside the country. But in the last two decades competition of home industry has for them become a more serious menace and will grow in severity if measures are not taken to regulate the industrialization of the country with a view to safeguard their position. Transitional measures will be necessary and in the interim period, which is likely to be long, we will have to delimit the spheres of production and reserve for our craftsmen sectors of our economic life in which they can be sheltered against the competition of large-scale industries within the

country. As far as possible the state will have to organize them for satisfying needs directly. There will have to be promoted a certain measure of regional self-sufficiency on barter basis. But in the production of staple goods for the market the small producer will always be at a disadvantage in comparison with the large-scale producer ; and as he cannot be protected for all time, eventually the production of these goods will have to be taken over by large-scale industries. Artistic handicrafts are however in a class by themselves and can maintain and even develop their position if they are properly directed and adequately assisted by the state. They are a part of our social heritage and have to be preserved for aesthetic and cultural reason, but made more progressive than they have been in the past.

Small-scale industries, during the transition period and later, will need large measure of state assistance and supervision. To-day workers in these industries are more underpaid and over-worked than the workers in organized industries. Owing to their being scattered over a large area and their limited means, they are not in a position to organize themselves for self-protection and are being exploited very badly. The A. I. S. A. has attempted to protect the hand-spinner and weaver and do their marketing. The organizers of the A. I. S. A. are working with a missionary zeal and rare devotion to duty. It is necessary to develop and provide public organization for all other small industries whose survival may be desirable for transitional period or for all time. Unorganized small industries have no future in this country. They cannot be efficient and healthy without organization and the organization must have the good of the producers at heart. The middleman who is out to make money for himself will always take unfair advantage of the producer. Even if a co-operative organization takes charge of their affairs and promotes their interests, its organizers will have to be men of high public spirit and their work will have to be a vocation to them and not merely a means of livelihood. That means that the continued existence of these industries will also depend upon a large degree of socialization, i.e., creation of an organization imbued with a sense of public duty and high regard for the interest of the community. The days of decentralized, individualistic production are over even for the small-scale producer. Both from the point of view of his interest and functions he has to develop habits and instruments of corporate action and throw up

leaders of high ability and character to ensure for him a place of security and social utility in the economic system of the future.

These organizations will have to be, as stated above, public corporations in different forms. Public corporations have, as a matter of fact, to play a role of increasing importance in planned economy in all countries. The Bombay Planners have suggested that in all state-owned enterprises the industries should be managed by public corporations. This is a very sound suggestion and merits serious consideration. The advantages of this form of organization for public enterprises is that it is intended to combine technical knowledge and experience, flexibility and a high standard of efficiency with a regard for public good, and exclude the intrusion of elements into economic administration irrelevant to or incompatible with it. This organization has to be autonomous within well-defined limits and though it should be amenable to public control and responsive to public opinion, "politics" in the limited sense has to be taken out of its policies and administration. This form has been widely adopted lately and in India is represented, though with reservations arising out of the dominance of British interests in the whole field of administration in this country, by the Reserve Bank and the Railway Board. It is desirable that public corporations should be experimented with and tenets of policy and rules of administration evolved suitable to the industries organized in this form. But in all public corporations it has to be ensured that they are truly public, i.e., in their policy and practice, they pursue and safeguard public interests and are not private monopolies in disguise armed with public authority. In a number of so-called public corporations in other countries private interests are still in control of the situation and under the cloak of public good are working for private ends. The existence of private monopolies in economic life is a serious handicap for the development of genuine public corporations. In India this consideration is particularly important owing to the trustification of our organized industries through the working of the managing agency system and special care would be necessary to prevent public corporations being controlled or dominated virtually by sectional interests.

So far nothing has been said about planning in agriculture which really is and must be the most important part of economic planning in India. Agriculture being the mainstay of our economic

life and most of our people being agriculturists, planned development of agriculture is and cannot but be of vital importance for the economic development of the country. The Bombay Plan proposes to eliminate the rent-receiving class—the landlords—and make the cultivator the owner in direct contact with the state. It also provides improvement of agricultural technique by the application of science to agriculture, development of irrigation, conservation and reclamation of land and promotion of agricultural research. All these proposals are unexceptionable in themselves, but leave the problem of small and fragmented holdings—which is the most important problem of agriculture—untouched. Co-operative farming is the remedy suggested by them for remedying this most serious evil, but it has been barely mentioned and very little has been said regarding the measures necessary for actual introduction of co-operative farming. It has to be realized that the scope for improvement of agricultural technique will be strictly limited in this country unless the twin problems of agrarian relations and dwarf holdings split into tiny strips are solved. These problems are fundamental and agriculture will remain a stagnant, if not decadent, industry unless a solution is found for them. The Bombay Planners propose to eliminate the landlords in the first instance by taking over the collection of rents for them and paying them net rental after deducting expenses and later buying them out by paying compensation. This procedure is likely to give good results and cause minimum dislocation in our rural economy and can be commended on that account. The only difficulty which is likely to arise in its adoption is that incidence of rents varies within wide limits and has no relation to the difference in productivity of land and paying capacity of tenants ; and as soon as the state steps into the landlords' shoes and assumes responsibility for the collection of rents, these variations of rents are bound to become more obvious and unjustifiable and clamant demand for the redress of this real grievance will be made and it will be difficult for a democratic government to resist it. It would be desirable for the state to undertake the admittedly difficult task of standardization of rents or at least removal of the more glaring anomalies before it assumes the responsibility for becoming the universal landlord. But the evil of small holdings presents greater difficulties, for over a large part of arable area the tenant is in effect part-proprietor now and cannot be deprived of his

rights. Any scheme of large-scale farming has to reckon with him and his passionate attachment to his tiny plot of land. In other words, property rights of the cultivator have to be respected and co-operative farming has to be introduced without causing any serious apprehension in his mind. One essential condition of the success of co-operative farming is willing co-operation of these extremely petty proprietors. The question deserves much more than a passing reference and has to be given serious and detailed consideration in any scheme for agricultural development. Peasant proprietorship is no alternative to the scheme. A peasant proprietor must at least have an economic holding, i.e., he must get a living wage from its cultivation and find in it full-time occupation for himself, his family-labour and his cattle and scope for the application of progressive technique. Even if it is granted that on the average at least a ten-acre holding will be economic in this sense of the word, there is room for only 20 million\* cultivating families of peasant proprietors on this basis and at present there are about 60 million families on the land. The problem is extremely difficult, but has to be faced. It is easy to ignore the problem and concentrate on measures of technical improvement, but importance of the problem does not become any the less on that account. The solution of this problem must be regarded a pivotal point in all schemes of economic development of the country and its cardinal importance has not only to be appreciated but made the basis of all policies which are meant to be put into effect and expected to yield results. It may be repeated that all escapist devices are not only futile but dangerous. They will bring their nemesis in disillusionment and unhealthy re-action.

Planning in India on the lines indicated in the Bombay Plan and most other plans must mean an economic and social revolution and, therefore, even if it is peaceful—and every attempt should be made to keep it so—it requires a truly revolutionary fervour and driving power to carry it out. Revolutions are never accomplished in laboratories, research institutes and administrative bureaus. They need popular resurgence and enthusiasm based upon a social vision and inspiring purpose. For this we need not only our own government

\* The total cultivable area of India is a little over 200 millions of acres. Most of the so-called cultivable waste is really uncultivable.

with full powers but a party of action which can rally public enthusiasm, and is in living contact with the masses and their needs. Such a party does not exist at present in India and will have to be organized and made effective even after the political deadlock has been resolved and full self-government established. Communal differences are a serious difficulty, but lack of cohesion and unity of purpose among the progressive elements of our national life are much more so. The so-called Left forces in India are hopelessly divided, and unless they learn the lesson of the fatal Left disunity in Europe and elsewhere before the war, it will be easy to hang them separately because they are incapable of hanging together. The outlook for successful planning in India is therefore not at all bright or hopeful. And yet plans for the future have to be made, discussed and prepared for. The end of the war will find the world and India in a great crisis. It is possible that it may find us wanting and unequal to the task which it will present in its imperious urgency. But it is also possible—may be likely—that it will call up reserves of will, understanding and drive, the existence of which has to be assumed but cannot be proved. Planning at present has to be an act of faith—a belief in ourselves and our ability to rise to the height of the occasion in the crisis that is coming upon the world. The crises have their own logic and sanctions but can only be overcome and mastered for constructive ends by a conscious purpose which transcends personal interests combined with the will to put it into effect. Such a purpose we have to develop as best and as fast as we can in this country, for otherwise with the world on the march, we shall find ourselves in a slough of despond and unable to take action to get out of it.



## WHEN THE POET READ HIS VERSES

*By* RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WHEN the poet read his verses  
    at the royal court  
before the men of learning  
    and of high distinction,  
the courtiers and scholars  
    loudly acclaimed his praise  
while the prince crowned him  
    with a jewelled wreath.

The day wore on to evening,  
    and the poet as he walked back home  
    through the town ahum with his name,  
he saw at some wayside window  
    the bride sitting still  
    with a champak chain  
    before her on a lotus leaf.  
The poet sighed and murmured,  
    “‘This is not for me’”.

[ The author's own rendering of his Bengali poem, *Banchita* ( 3. 12. 38 ),  
published in *Ākāś-pradīp*, 1939. In the MS. the translation faces the original. ]

# “ABOVE ALL ELSE”\*

A SHORT STORY

By ANNADA SANKAR RAY

“So you see what sort of a country yours is,” concluded my friend’s wife, “Hundreds and thousands of fine fellows gave up their lives, not for their motherland, but crying for a little rice. If, knowing death certain, they had died in the name of the country might not a revolution—”

“Sssh ! Quiet !” My friend stopped her, shut the windows and turned on the electric fan.

Something was gripping my throat. Noticing that my difficulty in speaking was not removed even by the closing of the room my friend remarked, “You’re feeling uncomfortable in the heat, aren’t you ?”

“I’m feeling uncomfortable,” I answered, “but not because of the heat. There’s another reason.”

“May I hear it ?” Asked his wife.

“I’ve just thought of a story.” I said, “Shall I tell it ?”

“Of course.” She assented.

Re-opening the windows my friend breathed again, “There ! A story ! What a relief !” And my throat also was released.

On the day I entered college Boku Biswas took admittance in the same class. His proper name was Biraj Mohan. From the very first day we were friends. The reason may have been that both of us had passed in the second division though we deserved even better than the first. The Non-co-operation movement was at its height, neither of us had studied and it was only at the insistence of our elders that we sat for the examination. No one acknowledged the sacrifice we had made for the country in facing the ignominy of the second division ; only we two admitted it.

By temperament we were not similar. Boku was a first-rate conversationalist while I have always been reticent. Boku gradually drew away from me and I did not languish in his absence, for I had set myself the task of wiping out the disgrace of that second division.

\* “Above all else Man is Truth. No greater truth is there.”—Quotation from the famous Vaishnava poet, Chandidas.



One day I heard that Boku had responded to the call of Deshbandhu C. R. Das and entered the temple of nationalism, that is, a British prison. I felt ashamed for myself and proud for Boku.

Afterwards he changed colleges and the thread of our friendship was lost.

We met again in England. There he was a different person. In India he used to go about with tousled hair and a pair of broken spectacles. He would play a rough game of hockey wearing them. The boys of his age dubbed him affectionately 'Boku Bob.' Most of the time he wore a *lungi* and a short-sleeved shirt, both of *khaddar*. He may have had a cap too ; I don't remember. In England he was a full-fledged Sahib. When he dressed for sports and went to play tennis he looked like some Indian prince.

We envied him the large number of his English friends. For all old Chanakya said learning does not command homage nowadays. The homage goes to the sportsman.

In reply to my remonstrance Boku said, "See here, am I friendly with them only because they're English ? No, they are men. Men have classifications but they are above them. Men belong to different religions but they are superior to any. Men are variously coloured but they are finer than their skin. When a whole Man comes and stands in front of me I forget that he is English and I am Bengalee, that he is Christian and I am Hindu. He is a Man and I am too. For that matter, don't I associate as much with you ?"

That was true. It was not that Boku neglected us. He made no distinction between his own kind and others ; we did. We misunderstood him and used to say that coming to England had turned his head. From a lover of his country he had become a lover of the world. Whenever I saw him I used to tease him with, "Well, how are you, old Internationalist Biswas ?"

Boku would answer, "Now then, Nationalist Ray, I'm fine."

Boku came back a barrister and settled at Patna. I live in Bengal. We do not meet. I supposed Boku was as anglicised as ever but to my surprise I heard he had offered civil disobedience and gone to jail. Again I felt ashamed of myself and proud for him.

The practice Boku acquired after his release surpassed expectations. People from Patna said he was well established. What if his name, Boku, means stupid ! I heard he was as open-hearted and

friendly as ever. He had not married. What he earned he spent with both hands. All sorts of people professing all sorts of creeds slept and ate at his house month after month. He never let anyone he got hold of go, whether he be Mahatma Gandhi or Janab Jinnah. "Aiye hazrat, tashrif laiye," was constantly on his lips.

In politics he was a Leftist. He said so plainly at meetings. When his co-workers were put out he said, "International Socialism is greater than Indian Nationalism."

Such was Boku. And he had an English friend named Jennings who was very dear to him. Jennings worked for a London newspaper. Boku had invited him to visit the country before leaving London and written often afterwards renewing his invitation. Jennings had not had the opportunity to come. During this war he got it.

When Cripps came to India with proposals for a settlement Jennings came as a special correspondent. After Cripps left he stayed on to study the situation. Boku brought him to Patna and entertained him for a whole fortnight. He had much to tell him about politics.

From Patna Jennings went to Calcutta and from Calcutta to several other places. Then he returned to Patna to take leave of Boku. But this time he did not stay with him. He went instead to the house of an English friend.

Boku asked, "Why? Tell me."

"Am I obliged to?" He answered.

"No, no," said Boku, "Why should you be obliged to? You need not."

"It's not my fault," he said thickly, "but I won't say whose fault it is. Don't mind, Boku."

"I won't mind, Phil."

They saw each other as before. But there was a hitch somewhere. One day it came out in their conversation.

Jennings said, "Your leaders are clutching at a shadow. 'Quit India!' If we really quit what would happen? Who would stop Japan?"

"In order to stop Japan," Boku explained, "the first essential is a sense of responsibility. For various reasons the people of this country don't want to shoulder responsibility. To make them shoulder

it, responsibility must change hands. 'Quit India' means just this much and no more."

"Well and good. Take responsibility. But will you be able to keep it when you get it? If it were so easy would China be so wretched?"

"What is the harm in trying?"

"This is no time for any such experiments, Boku. You will gain only two or three months' independence by getting rid of those who know how to handle responsibility. Then two to three centuries of subjugation."

Boku's heart was burning. "Who knows? We may keep independent two or three centuries."

"Without our help?"

"With your help."

"Nonsense. I thought you were a realist." He grew angry. "China at least has a leader like Chiang Kai-Shek. Who have you?"

Boku replied, "Pandit Nehru."

"Oh! That great pundit!" His tone was contemptuous, as though he were speaking of some pedant in a Sanskrit school.

Boku could contain himself no longer. He spoke out, "Well, I've never heard that Stalin studied military tactics. Will not those who address him so respectfully as 'Marshal Stalin', 'Marshal Stalin', be able to say 'General Nehru'?"

"Ha, ha! General Nehru!" Jennings mocked, "That means defeat on the very first day. My dear Boku, I thought you were a realist."

Boku gave as good as he got, "My dear Phil, I realise you are an imperialist."

Taking his hand Philip said, "Forgive me if I am rude. But I can't understand how you can survive a single day without us. So I suspect you intend to come to terms with Japan."

Boku withdrew his hand. "Good-bye," he said slightly.

Some days later August came. Rounding up was begun. Boku too was arrested. There is no use describing the things that happened after that. It will be enough to say that our mutual friend, Hardip Singh, was cruelly murdered by a mob. And several other friends with their families barely escaped being killed. From that time on they were so incensed that they scented violence at the very

mention of Gandhi and conspiracy in the name of Congress. They said the leaders were well off comfortably lodged in jail; still it would be wiser for them to acknowledge their mistake and come back.

Boku's release put him in a difficult situation. There was nothing to be done, yet everybody said, "Do something, Boku Bob."

Though he was in good health Boku got newspapers to publish a report that he was suffering from a number of ailments and had to go to the Himalayas for a change. A mountain abode is preferable to the abode of death. His followers were silenced.

While preparations were being made for his journey a Muslim friend became his guest. Employed in a government department he toured the whole of India.

Ali was as sociable as Boku. He stayed eight instead of four days and Boku kept postponing the date of his departure. It even seemed a change might not be necessary. Good food and talk appeared to be adding years to his life.

But he was unlucky. Just about that time Gandhiji fasted. And Boku also lost his appetite. Ali likewise, forgetful of his pleasure, sat about morosely. Not that he was very pleased with Gandhi, but the thought that Gandhi might go and India remain brought tears to his eyes. He said to Boku, "However wrong he may be, can we live without him?"

When no order came for his release Boku broke down under the grief of his certain death, even though he had often enough suspected Gandhi of being the friend of the rich and nothing to the workers. Ali could not proceed to Patna leaving his friend in such a state. So he stayed on to keep him company.

He fumed against the English even more than Boku. A tin of cigarettes was consumed an hour. But what he said in the end gave Boku a violent start.

"Pakistan. There's no other way but Pakistan."

"How do you get that?"

"How do I get that? If Hindus and Mussalmans with one voice were to say today, 'We want Gandhiji freed!' who is strong enough to keep him captive?"

"Then why don't they say so?"

"Why should they? They will if they get Pakistan."

Boku was thunderstruck.

"Perhaps you think Mussalmans are taking advantage of your difficulty to cry up their price but don't forget you did the same when the English were in the worst of difficulties. Quit India ! That is the way of politics. What's to be done ?"

"What do you know of politics !" Boku replied, "History will decide whether we were crying up our price or trying to save the country."

Argument arose. "It's most regrettable," said Ali, "Gandhiji will die without giving us our Pakistan. Such obstinacy ! How can Hindus and Mussalmans unite ! How can you drive out the English ! It seems to me independence will never come !"

"But how can you keep Pakistan if you get it ? What if the Japs come from one direction and the Russians from the other ?"

"You make me laugh." Ali laughed aloud. "If Hindus and Mussalmans are on good terms your sepoy will fight for us, like American sepoy are fighting for the English. If the Americans can fight in North Africa the Hindus can fight in Baluchistan and Assam."

"That's so. But if the country is split into two halves the Hindus will be broken-hearted. They can only fight if their hearts are whole and stout. You don't know us, friend."

Ali gave it up saying, "Then Gandhiji cannot be saved. Neither is there any hope of independence."

This time Boku repeated what Jennings had said to him, "My dear Ali, I thought you were a realist."

Ali answered, "I see you're a junior partner of the British imperialists. You're a Hindu imperialist."

Boku felt like exclaiming as Sita had, "Take me back, Mother Earth !" But he said not a word. He gave up talking.

I arrived in Almora several months after Boku. All this I heard from him there. He had nothing particular to do ; I also was on a holiday. One day I asked him, "All right, tell me, do you still believe that Man is greater than his religion, greater than his race ?"

"I want to believe it. But who lets me ?" Boku said regretfully. "Of those I loved as men one is not a man but an Englishman, and another is not a man but a Mussalman." With this he shrank into himself.

When my story was done my friend's wife commented, "Really,

I don't think independence will ever come. Such a terrible famine swept over us and we are more helpless than ever."

"Be quiet !" exclaimed my friend and glanced at the window. He has a terror of spies.

"Tell me," I said, "which is the bigger tragedy ? Famine or dissension ?"

"Famine certainly."

"No, the greater tragedy is that thirty crores of Hindus can not agree with five crores of English and ten crores of Mohammedans. I see no indication that they ever will. This war has grown out of just such a dissension. For twenty years it smouldered ; then one day fire broke out. I do not know when it will be extinguished. And the putting out of one fire brings no peace ; I already see indications of another."

My friend shuddered. His wife said, "That's just like you."

"Forget it. Don't let me disturb your dream of happiness. But the dream of my friend was broken. Now of course he has concentrated on his practice. But he cannot forget that Man is no more. Englishman, Mussalman, German, Jap-man—you have these instead. Which is the bigger tragedy ? That Man should pass away or men die ?"

*Translated from the original Bengali, by Lila Ray.*

# NATIR PUJA

## THE DANCING GIRL'S WORSHIP

A Drama by Rabindranath Tagore

Translated from the original Bengali by Marjorie Sykes.

[ NATIR PUJA was originally written and published in 1926. It was first staged in Calcutta in January 1927. In the same year an English translation by the author was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* ( Old Series ). The story is based on an old Buddhist legend. For a critical appreciation of the play see Vol. VIII, part 4 ( 1943 ) of this journal, which also contains reproductions of a wall-painting by Nandalal Bose illustrating the story.

The aim of the present translation, which was originally undertaken with the permission of the author, is two-fold : to make the English text as faithful to the original as possible, and to render the dialogue in simple and colloquial English so as to make it suitable for stage representation by students whose access to the play is limited to its English version. The translator wishes to acknowledge her debt to the author's own previous rendering as well as to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty for his valuable help and suggestions. Some songs which could not be translated have been omitted.

The author's own translation referred to above was prefaced by a brief description of the situation with which the play opens. For the interest of the readers we reproduce it below.—*Ed.* ]

### THE SITUATION

*The Lord Buddha once took his seat under an Asoka tree in the palace garden of King Bimbisar, of Magadha, and preached therefrom. On that sacred spot the king, who had become his devotee, established an altar and enjoined the princesses of his house to place thereon every evening daily offerings of worship.*

*Finding, later, that Prince Ajatasatru covets his father's throne, King Bimbisar has voluntarily abdicated in his son's favour and dwells at a distance from the Royal City.*

*Queen Lokeshvari, at first also a devotee of the new religion now burns under a sense of wrong at her husband's abdication and the renunciation of the world by her own son, Prince Chitra, and she fain would turn against the religion of Buddha's teaching.*

## THE PROLOGUE

UPALI *the Bhikshu*<sup>1</sup> enters singing.

Upali [ *Calling* ] Who is there ? Alms, give me alms, in the name of the Lord Buddha.

SRIMATI, *the palace dancing-girl*, enters and greets him reverently.

Upali. [ *Blessing her* ] May all prosperity be yours ! Who are you, my child ?

Srimati. I am the palace dancing-girl here.

Upali. Are you the only one awake today in all this city ?

Srimati. All the princesses are still asleep.

Upali. I have come for alms, in the name of the Lord Buddha.

Srimati. Then with your leave, Prabhu<sup>2</sup>, I'll go and call the princesses.

Upali. Today I have come to *you* for alms.

Srimati. To me ?—But I am so poor ! In your alms-bowl anything that I could give would seem so mean. What can I give, tell me ?

Upali. Your best gift.

Srimati. What is my best gift ? I do not even know that.

Upali. No, but the grace of the Lord is upon you. He knows.

Srimati. O Sir, then may He Himself take whatever I have.

Upali. Indeed He will take it, child. He will accept the flowers of your worship. Spring, the king of the seasons, touches the flowering woods—he himself awakens them to sacrifice. For you too the appointed day is at hand. I came to tell you so ; you are indeed blessed.

Srimati. I'll await my hour. [ *She makes the sign of reverence.*  
*They go out.*

*The princesses enter.*

Princesses. Prabhu, Prabhu, do not leave us so. Be pleased to accept our alms . . . O, what a shame ! He has gone !

Ratnavali. What are you all afraid of, Vasavi ? There's no dearth of folk to take alms. It's the givers who are rare.

Nanda. No, Ratna. To find one to take the offering, much merit must be earned. Today is lost to us. [ *They go out.*

1 A Buddhist mendicant monk.

2 *Lit.*, lord, master. A reverential form of address.



## ACT ONE

### *The Palace Garden at Magadha.*

*The Queen-Mother* LOKESVARI *enters with the Bhikshuni*<sup>1</sup> UTPALAPARNA.

*Lokesvari.* So the Maharaja Bimbisara remembers<sup>2</sup> me ?

*Bhikshuni.* Yes, that is my message.

*Lokesvari.* Today he worships at his altar beneath the *asoka* tree. That is why he remembers, I suppose ?

*Bhikshuni.* To-night is Vasanta Purnima—the full moon of spring.

*Lokesvari.* And so they worship—*whom* do they worship ?

*Bhikshuni.* Why, today is the Lord Buddha's birthday<sup>3</sup>—it's *His* festival.

*Lokesvari.* Go tell my husband that my worship is finished and done with. Other people may offer their flowers and lamps ; I've emptied my whole world.

*Bhikshuni.* What are you saying, Maharani ?

*Lokesvari.* My only son, my prince, my Chitra—they've lured him away and made a monk of him, and now they ask me for an offering ! They cut the root of the creeper and then they ask for flowers.

*Bhikshuni.* You have given him away, but you have not lost him. Once you held him in your arms ; today you may still hold him—in the whole world.

*Lokesvari.* Have you a son of your own, woman ?

*Bhikshuni.* No.

*Lokesvari.* Have you ever had one ?

*Bhikshuni.* No, I was widowed when a child.

*Lokesvari.* Then be silent ; talk not of things which you cannot understand.

*Bhikshuni.* Maharani, it was you who first welcomed the true religion into the palace courts. Why then today . . . .

*Lokesvari.* Ah, so they still remember that ! I'm surprised, I thought your Master had forgotten it. Every day I used to call

1 A mendicant Buddhist nun.

2 The Sanskrit word *remember*, when used of a highly-placed person, has the significance of *asks to see, sends for*.

3 At present the birthday of the Buddha falls on *Vaisakhi Purnima*, i. e., in summer. In the sixth century B. C., however, it fell in spring ( on *Vasanta Purnima* ).

the Bhikshu Dharmaruchi to read the Scriptures to me, before I would touch water. A hundred Bhikshus were fed before I broke my fast. Every year at the end of the rains it was my vow to provide every member of the Sangha with the yellow robe. That day when that enemy of Dharma, Devadatta preached, and everyone else was wavering, I alone stood firm ; I invited the Lord Tathagata here. He sat and spoke under this *asoka*, so that all heard the sacred word. O cruel and ungrateful one ! This is how I am rewarded ! Nothing has happened to *them*—to the women who hated me so fiercely and put the poison in my food. Their sons still live like princes !

*Bhikshuni*. One can't measure truth by this world's values, Maharani. Light is golden, but can it be weighed with gold ?

*Lokesvari*. You remember the day when Prince Ajatasatru cast in his lot with Devadatta. I laughed that day, fool that I was ! These men wanted to cross the sea on a broken raft, I thought. He pinned his faith to Devadatta's powers ; he hoped to become king by that means, while his father was still alive. I had no misgivings ; I boasted that the divine power of a Guru mightier even than Devadatta would bring such unholy schemes to nought. What faith I had ! I got the Lord Buddha—Sakyasingha, I mean—to come and give my husband his blessing. And yet who had the victory ?

*Bhikshuni*. You had. Don't turn that inward victory into a mere external thing.

*Lokesvari*. My victory, you call it ?

*Bhikshuni*. Certainly I do. King Bimbisara freely gave up his throne to the son who craved a kingdom, and he won for himself that day a kingdom that . . .

*Lokesvari*. Kingdom ! Empty words ! Such a kingdom is a mockery for a Kshatriya king. Look at me, see what I am today—widowed, though my husband lives ; barren, having borne a son ; homeless, in the midst of a palace ! *Those* are not empty words ! Folk who never accepted your religion make me a laughing-stock today. Go tell this to your Master, your Thunder-Spirit ! Where is He now ? Let His thunderbolt fall on their heads !

*Bhikshuni*. Maharani, let them laugh their fill ; all this is a fleeting dream, there is no reality in it.

*Lokesvari*. It's a dream, may be, but it's a dream that does not please me. I want other dreams, called wealth, and motherhood,

and honour. Those women yonder, how they flourish on such dreams, how high they hold their heads ! Go and talk to *them* ! Let *them* bring offerings for the worship !

*Bhikshuni.* Very well, I will go.

*Lokesvari.* Go, but remember, *they* are not fools, like me. *They* will lose nothing, they will keep their treasures. *They* don't believe in the Buddha ; Sakyasingha's gracious mercy has not been granted to them—luckily for them ! Well ? Why are you standing there dumb ? Pretending to be patient, are you ?

*Bhikshuni.* What am I to say ? Even now my inner patience fails me.

*Lokesvari.* Your patience is failing you, so you busy yourself with inner forgiveness of the likes of me ! The silent insolence of you people is too much ! Go ! [ *The Bhikshuni is about to go, but the Queen recalls her* ] Wait one moment Bhikshuni. Chitra has taken some new name, do you know what it is ?

*Bhikshuni.* Yes, Kusalasila.

*Lokesvari.* He thinks the name unclean by which his mother called him—so lightly he flings it away !

*Bhikshuni.* If you wish, Maharani, I could bring him to see you one day.

*Lokesvari.* If I wish ? O shame that I, who brought him into the world—that I should have to wish you to bring him to me !

*Bhikshuni.* Then have I your leave to go ?

*Lokesvari.* Wait a little. You see him sometimes ?

*Bhikshuni.* Yes.

*Lokesvari.* Very well, perhaps just once...if only he...no, never mind !

*Bhikshuni.* I will tell him. Perhaps you will see him.

[ *She goes out.* ]

*Lokesvari.* Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps ! When the blood of my own veins fed his growing life, there was no perhaps in that ! His ancient debt to his mother has come down to this—a hesitating perhaps ! That's what they call *Dharma*. [ *She calls* ] Mallika !

MALLIKA enters.

*Mallika.* Maharani ?

*Lokesvari.* Have you heard anything of Prince Ajatasatru ?

*Mallika.* Yes, he has gone to fetch Devadatta. Not a remnant of the worship of the Three Jewels<sup>1</sup> will be left in the kingdom.

*Lokesvari.* The coward ! A king who dares not rule ! Surely I am a living proof how little power the Buddha's teaching has. Yet he dare not even defy that falsehood without the backing of that empty fellow Devadatta.

*Mallika.* Maharani, those who own much have much to fear. He has a kingdom to rule, so fear drives him to seek alliance with every power there is. When he fears he has conceded too much to Buddha's followers, he turns and propitiates Devadatta's with more still. He is trying to secure his fortune both ways.

*Lokesvari.* My fortune is secure enough ! then ! I have nothing to lose, so I need not stoop to seek the aid of falsehood.

*Mallika.* Now you are talking just like Utpalaparna the Bhikshuni. Blessed is Maharani Lokesvari, she says ; by the grace of the Lord Buddha she is freed from all ties which bind men to illusion.

*Lokesvari.* These catch-words only anger me. Enjoy, if you will, your stainless, empty truth—give me all my earth-stained ties again ! Then once more I would light my lamps at the altar beneath the *asoka* tree ; once more would a hundred Bhikshus be fed ; their sacred texts from end to end recited in my palace. But if that cannot be, let Devadatta come ! I care not whether he be true or false. I shall go to the watch-tower to see how near they are.

[ *They go out.*

*SRIMATI enters with her Vina : she spreads her carpet in the shade of a creeper and looks off-stage.*

*Srimati.* It is time. Come, all of you.

*Sings.*

At dead of night, what whisper came ?

I know not, I.

Was it in waking, was it in dream ?

I know not, I.

*MALATI enters.*

*Malati.* Are you Srimati ?

*Srimati.* Yes, dear, what is it ?

*Malati.* The door-keeper told me to come to you. I want to learn to sing.

*Srimati.* I've never seen you in the palace before, have I ?

*Malati.* No, I've just come from my village. My name is Malati.

*Srimati.* Why did you come, child ? Didn't the days pass quickly enough there ? There you were a flower for worship, the gods were glad. Here you will deck the garland of pleasure, the evil spirits will laugh. Your spring-time will have come in vain. You've come to learn to sing, you say ? Is that all you hope for ?

*Malati.* May I tell you the truth ? My hope is much larger, but I am shy to speak of it.

*Srimati.* I see, is that it ? You hope to be a queen some day—an evil hope ! Well, perhaps you may be, if the sins of your former birth are black enough. But when the wild bird sighs for the golden cage, it's an evil spirit that sits in her wings. Go back, go while you may, it's not yet too late.

*Malati.* What are you telling me, sister ? I don't understand.

*Srimati.* This is what I say. Alas, that fetters should beguile you seeming ornaments ; alas, that death should bewitch you, seeming beauty.<sup>1</sup>

*Malati.* No, you don't understand at all ; I'll tell you plainly. I've heard that one day the Lord Buddha visited this garden, this *asoka* tree. King Bimbisara built an altar there, didn't he ?

*Srimati.* Yes, that is so.

*Malati.* And the princesses make offerings there every evening. If that is not allowed me, may I not sweep the place and keep it clean ? That was my hope when I joined the singing girls.

*Srimati.* Welcome, sister, I am glad. The lamps of worship in the hands of the princesses give more smoke than light ; they have been waiting for the touch of your innocent hands. But who put the thought into your mind ?

*Malati.* How can I tell you, sister ? There's a voice like fire in every wind today. Only the other day my brother heard it and went. He is eighteen years old. I held him by the hand and asked him where he was going, and he said, "To seek for it."

*Srimati.* The sea is calling with one voice to the waves of every river, and the moon is at the full. [*Taking Malati's hand*] What's

1 This speech represents a song in the original.

this ? A ring on your finger ? Has my flower of paradise been sold like common dust ?

*Malati.* I will tell you everything, you will understand.

*Srimati.* Yes, I know what it is to grieve, and so I understand.

*Malati.* He was rich, we were poor. I used to watch him silently, from a distance. One day he came to our house and said that he loved me. My father said, "Malati is fortunate." When all the preparations were finished he came to our door. He was dressed as a Bhikshu, not as a bridegroom. A saffron robe, and a staff in his hand. He said to me, "If ever we meet, it will not be here, but upon the Path of *Mukti*." Sister, don't be angry with me. Even now the tears come, for my heart is very weak.

*Srimati.* Let the tears fall, my child. They will lay the dust on your Path of *Mukti*.

*Malati.* I bowed to him and said, "My bonds are not yet loosed. Give me the ring you promised." This is the ring he gave me. When it falls from my finger before the altar of the Lord, we shall meet again on the Path of *Mukti*.

*Srimati.* How many women in these days have broken the homes they once built up ! How many have put on the saffron robe and taken the road ! Is it the Way that draws them, or the Wayfarer—who knows ? Many and many a time I have lifted my hands and prayed with all my soul to the Great One, that He would not remain unmoved. He has set flowing in every home the flood of women's tears, may He grant them peace ! Look, here come the princesses.

*Enter VASAVI, NANDA, RATNAVALI, AJITA, MALLIKA and BHADRA.*

*Vasavi.* Why, who is this child ? See how she has piled up her hair, and stuck a *jaba* flower over her ear. Look, Nanda, how she has woven *akanda* flowers into the plaits. And see that necklace of scarlet seeds ? Where did she come from, Srimati ?

*Srimati.* From her village. Her name is Malati.

*Ratnavali.* A fine catch, to be sure ! You'll make a disciple of her, I suppose ? You couldn't save *our* souls, so you get hold of a village girl, and palm off your salvation on her.

*Srimati.* I've no anxiety about the salvation of village girls, princess. Heaven's handiwork there is not hidden, either by dust or ornaments, so Heaven knows them for its own.

*Ratnavali.* Sooner than go to Heaven through *your* preaching, I'd rather not go there at all !

*Nanda.* I say Ajita, why should she always tease poor Srimati so ? Srimati never preaches.

*Vasavi.* O, but there's a world of preaching in her silence. See how she's smiling now,—isn't that a sermon in itself ?

*Ratnavali.* O, a marvellous sermon ! I'll tell you what it means—"Let the bitter be overcome by the sweet, and words by smiles."

*Vasavi.* Why don't you answer back a bit, Srimati ? Your gentleness is past all bearing. It's far better to make people angry than to make them ashamed.

*Srimati.* If I were really good at heart I could afford to make a show of being bad. The full moon can afford to show her shadows. But what if the moonless night were to cover itself in cloud ?

*Ajita.* See how bewildered our village girl looks. She must be thinking that the tongues of palace girls are sharper than they are sweet. What is your name ? I've forgotten.

*Malati.* Malati.

*Ajita.* Tell us what you were thinking, do.

*Malati.* I was feeling a little hurt, because I love my sister.

*Ajita.* It's a trick of ours to hurt those we love. That is one of the rules of palace rhetoric. Make a note of it !

*Bhadra.* You were going to say something more, Malati. Do tell us. I'm longing to know what you think of us.

*Malati.* I was going to say, "Sakes alive honey<sup>1</sup>, how you love to hear yourselves talk ! You're missing a chance of music"

[ *All the princesses laugh loudly.*

*Vasavi.* Sakes alive, honey, sakes alive ! We must call the palace grammar-master ! Here's a new interjection for him !

*Ratnavali.* Sakes alive, Vasavi ! Sakes alive, honey—thou jewel in the royal crown !

*Vasavi.* Sakes alive, Ratnavali ! Sakes alive, honey, thou moon of enchanting beauty ! What a new wealth of language !

*Malati.* Sister, are they angry with me ?

*Nanda.* Don't be afraid, Malati. When the sky-nymphs send

<sup>1</sup> The original word *Hāngā* is untranslatable. It is a rustic interjection which sounds amusing to the palace-bred princesses and causes much ironic merriment.







hail on the *shiuli* flowers, they are not angry. That is their way of caressing them.

*Ajita.* See, Sreemati has a song, in her mind. She doesn't hear a word we are saying. Sing to us, Srimati : we will listen.

SRIMATI *sings*

At dead of night, what whisper came ?  
 I know not, I.  
 Was it in waking, was it in dream ?  
 I know not, I.  
 I bend to common tasks of home,  
 I wander down the open ways ;  
 What secret word that bids me come  
 Haunts all the traffic of the days ?  
 I know not, I.  
 Fear or triumph or nameless pain ?  
 A word that whispers "Never again."  
 Is it in my heart, or the heavens on high ?—  
 I know not, I.

*Vasavi.* Malati, your eyes are full of tears. What was it in the song that touched you ?

*Malati.* Srimati has heard the Call.

*Vasavi.* What call ?

*Malati.* The call that set my brother wandering, the call that my . . . . [*She breaks off.*

*Vasavi.* Your what ?

*Srimati.* Hush, Malati dear, don't say any more. Dry your eyes, this is no place for weeping.

*Vasavi.* Why did you stop her, Srimati ? Do you think we only know how to laugh ?

*Bhadra.* Don't we know there are places which laughter does not reach ?

*Malati.* Princesses, there's a voice in every wind today. Have't you heard ?

*Nanda.* No, child. The petals of the lotus open to the morning light, but not the walls of the palace.

[ LOKESVARI enters. All make obeisance.

*Lokesvari.* I can't bear it ! There ! Don't you hear it ?—that chant of praise along the roads : *Salutation to the Buddha, who teaches ! Salutation to the Sangha, which is supreme !* Alas, it can still stir my heart. [ *Stopping her ears* ] It must be stopped, this very day, now, at once.

*Mallika.* Calm yourself, my Lady.

*Lokesvari.* How can I calm myself ? Which text will you give me, this one ? *Salutation to the Supreme Peace, the Supreme Mercy !* No, never, never again. This is my text now : *Salutation to the terrible goddess of angry lightning ! Salutation to . . .* Through strife, through fire, through bloodshed, the earth will find its peace. For otherwise the son will leave his mother's arms, and the king in his splendour will drop like a withered leaf from his throne. What are you doing here, maidens ?

*Ratnavali.* [ *Laughing* ] We are waiting for salvation. We're purifying our sinful minds and are well on the way to become Srimati's disciples.

*Vasavi.* You shouldn't talk so flippantly.

*Lokesvari.* This dancing-girl's disciples ? Yes, that's what this religion leads to. The fallen come preaching salvation ! Srimati has suddenly become a saint now, has she ? When Lord Buddha came to our garden and everyone in the palace came to see him, I sent for her too, out of pity. The wretched girl refused to come. And now, it seems, when the Bhikshu Upali comes for alms, he avoids our princesses, and receives them only at her hands. O what fools you are ! You are of royal blood, yet you are set on welcoming this religion—this religion that will drag your proud throne in the dust. Beggars will rule henceforth from the thrones of kings ! Do you call that the true religion, you suicides ? [ *To SRIMATI* ] What holy text did Upali give you at your initiation, dancing girl ? Let me hear it. Let me see how far you will dare to go. Your sinful tongue ought to be struck dumb.

*Srimati.* [ *Standing up and folding her hands*

*Salutation to the Buddha who teaches !*

*Salutation to the Dhamma that saves !*

*Salutation to the Sangha which is supreme !*

*Lokesvari.* [ *Joining in* ] *Salutation to the Buddha who teaches . . .*  
No, no, enough.

*Srimati.* *O thou who hast pity on my orphaned self . . .*

*Lokesvari.* [ *Beating her breast* ] *O, my orphaned self ! Srimati,*  
*do recite—the Lord most compassionate . . .*

*Srimati and Lokesvari.* *For the sake of all sinners the Lord most*  
*compassionate achieved the supreme virtues and attained the supreme*  
*enlightenment.*

*Lokesvari.* Stop, stop, no more of that, that's over now. *Salu-*  
*tation to the terrible goddess of angry lightning !* [ *An attendant enters.*

*Attendant.* [ *Beckoning Lokesvari aside* ] Maharani, Prince  
Chitra has come to visit his mother.

*Lokesvari.* Who says this religion is false ? As soon as the  
sacred text was chanted, the evil vanished ! You unbelievers, you  
laughed in secret at my misery—but look at the power of His grace,  
that “most merciful Lord” ; it can melt a stone ! Mark my words,  
I shall have my son again, I shall have my throne again ! As for  
those who insulted the Lord, we shall see how long their arrogance  
will endure. *My refuge is in the Buddha ! My refuge is in the Dhamma !*  
*My refuge is in the Sangha !* [ *As she speaks, she goes out with the attendant.*

*Ratnavali.* Which way does the wind blow now, Mallika ?

*Mallika.* The sky nowadays is full of winds run mad. There's  
no telling which way they will come, or who will be whirled away.  
There's that Kalandak who has done nothing but gamble for forty  
years, he's suddenly turned monk, I hear. Nandibardhan too, who  
used to promise to give all he had for sacrifice—nowadays he beats up  
every Brahmin within sight.

*Ratnavali.* So Prince Chitra has come back.

*Mallika.* Wait and see how it all ends.

*Malati.* Is it true, Srimati sister, that when our Lord came,  
you didn't go to see Him ?

*Srimati.* Yes, quite true. In His presence, to present oneself  
is to present an offering. I was unclean ; the offering of my heart  
was not ready for sacrifice.

*Malati.* O how sad, sister, how sad !

*Srimati.* If we go to Him so lightly, we shall go in vain. Do  
we really see Him if we merely look at Him ? Do we really hear  
Him, when His words fall on our outward ears alone ?

*Ratnavali.* Oho ! that's a hit at us, is it ? The slightest breath of indulgence blows away all this dancing girl's manners.

*Srimati.* My days of mere good manners are over. I'll give you no false flattery. I tell you plainly, your eyes have looked on Him, but you have never seen Him.

*Ratnavali.* Vasavi ! Bhadra ! How can you put up with such impertinence—from a dancing girl ?

*Vasavi.* If we can't put up with truth from without, we shall have to put up with falsehood from within. Srimati, chant your *mantra* once more, won't you ? My mind is full of thorns ; may it blunt their pricks !

*Srimati.* *Salutation to the Buddha who teaches !*

*Salutation to the Dhamma that saves !*

*Salutation to the Sangha which is supreme !*

*Nanda.* We went out to see the Lord ; the Lord Himself has appeared to Srimati in her own heart.

*Ratnavali.* Are you lost to all modesty, dancing-girl ? Aren't you going to contradict that ?

*Srimati.* Why should I, princess ? If He deigns to set foot in such a heart as mine, is the glory mine, or His ?

*Vasavi.* Enough ! Words lead only to more words. Sing to us, Srimati.

SRIMATI *sings*

Have you come to my door, my Lord,

To seek my inmost me ?

Call your call today within.

For at your call.

The hidden flowers come out on the naked branches.

At your call.

The new dawn comes with a pitcher of light in her hand,

And the deep darkness answers.

[ *A Buddhist chant is heard off-stage : Salutation to the three Jewels ! Salutation to the Enlightened ! Salutation to the Great Life ! Salutation to the Most Merciful !*

[ *Enter UTPALAPARNA, All make obeisance.*

*All.* Your blessing, Holy Mother.

*Bhikshuni.* May you enjoy all blessing, may all the gods preserve

*you, may good be yours for ever, by the grace of all the Buddhas.*

*Bhikshuni.* Srimati !

*Srimati.* What is your command ?

*Bhikshuni.* Today is Vasanta Purnima—the full moon of spring. We celebrate the birth of the Lord Buddha. It will be Srimati's task to lead the rites of worship at the altar beneath the *asoka*.

*Ratnavali.* I cannot have heard aright. What Srimati are you speaking of ?

*Bhikshuni.* This Srimati, here.

*Ratnavali.* This palace dancing-girl ?

*Bhikshuni.* Yes, this dancing-girl.

*Ratnavali.* Did you get this from the elders ?

*Bhikshuni.* Yes, it is they who gave the order.

*Ratnavali.* Who gave the order ? What are their names ?

*Bhikshuni.* Upali is one.

*Ratnavali.* Upali—a barbar.

*Bhikshuni.* Another is Sunanda.

*Ratnavali.* He's a cowherd's son.

*Bhikshuni.* Another is Sunit.

*Ratnavali.* He's a Pukkush by caste, isn't he ?

*Bhikshuni.* Princess, their caste is one and the same. Theirs is an aristocracy of which you know nothing.

*Ratnavali.* No, indeed I don't. Perhaps this dancing-girl does—perhaps there's no great difference between their caste and hers. That's why they have such a regard for her, no doubt !

*Bhikshuni.* That's a true word.... Bimbisara, the king's father, is leaving his hermitage today, and coming in person to join our worship. I will go to welcome him. [ *She goes out.*

*Ajita.* Where are you going, Srimati ?

*Srimati.* To wash the altar under the *asoka* tree.

*Malati.* Sister, do take me with you.

*Nanda.* I will go also.

*Ajita.* Yes, perhaps I might as well go too.

*Vasavi.* I too would like to see what kind of preparations you make.

*Ratnavali.* How charming ! Srimati will serve the altar, and you, maids-in-waiting, will do the fanning !

*Vasavi.* While you stand here and breathe out burning curses ! Well, that won't set the *asoka* on fire, and it won't disturb Srimati's peace of mind, either.

[ *They all go out except RATNAVALI and MALLIKA.*

*Ratnavali.* This cannot last, it cannot last. It's completely against all nature. O Mallika, why wasn't I born a man ? Shame on these bracelets—if only I wore a sword instead ! You too, Mallika, you were silent all the time, you didn't say a word. Are you also pining to be maid-in-waiting to that dancer ?

*Mallika.* She would not have me, even if I were. She knows me too well.

*Ratnavali.* I can't understand how you can suffer this in silence. Patience is the weapon of the vulgar and helpless, not of the daughters of a royal house.

*Mallika.* I do not care to waste my strength. A day of reckoning is at hand, I know.

*Ratnavali.* Are you sure of that ?

*Mallika.* Yes, quite sure.

*Ratnavali.* If it's a secret, don't tell me. All I wish to know is this—do we princesses stand by with folded hands, while that dancing-girl conducts the evening worship ?

*Mallika.* No, never, I give you my word.

*Ratnavali.* Amen to that, in the name of our palace gods !

[ *To be continued* ]



# WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

*By* K. R. KRIPALANI

ONE by one the old stalwarts pass away. England will remember Sir William Rothenstein as a distinguished artist, a judicious critic and as a writer of literary merit. His portraits and drawings will continue to be treasured by art museums on both sides of the Atlantic, and his Memoirs will delight readers for generations to come. An accomplished artist, he wielded both pen and brush with equal dexterity. Unlike many artists, he had culture as well as talent. His intellectual sensibility, his wide and large-hearted sympathies and his capacity for friendship brought him wide and valuable contacts which he has so charmingly described in his three volumes of Memoirs.

Indians will remember him for his keen and sympathetic interest in Indian art and for his life-long friendship with Rabindranath Tagore. It is true that his understanding and appreciation of Indian art was neither as genuine nor as deep as that of, for example, Havell's. It is also true that he opposed Havell's proposal to entrust the building of New Delhi to Indian architects. This is how he justified his stand. "There was no reason why buildings which were to be occupied—so we thought then—by Englishmen should not be frankly European in plan and in elevation too." Apparently he believed that his countrymen were destined to be lodged in Delhi for ever. Just as Fatehpur Sikri endures as a monument to the Moghul genius for architecture, so the insipid, characterless, monotonous buildings of New Delhi will remain—unless they are pulled down and refashioned by Indian artists of a future free India—a testimony to the British lack of imagination and talent for art. Rothenstein's tribute to Lutyens does not speak well of his own critical judgment. "Yet Lutyens's genius for striking effects combined with charm of detail was to serve him well. I asked Lutyens to meet Tagore, when he cracked jokes all the time. It was not easy to convince Tagore that Lutyens was the right man for Delhi."

However, this is not the occasion to recall what Rothenstein failed to do. Rather we should gratefully acknowledge what he did. He it was who introduced Tagore to Yeats and to other literary men of England whose enthusiasm encouraged Tagore to consent to the



publication of 'Gitanjali.' He it was who proposed to the India Society to publish 'Gitanjali' which brought the Poet fame in Europe and the award of the Nobel Prize. We may take for granted that in trying to make Tagore known to his countrymen Rothenstein could not have had a very smooth and ready path. There were—as there still are—powerful elements in the English public life who would resent publicity and honour being given to an Indian. Rothenstein himself tells us : "Fox-Strangways wanted Oxford or Cambridge to give Tagore an honorary degree. Lord Curzon, when consulted, said that there were more distinguished men in India than Tagore. I wondered who they were ; and I regretted that England had left it to a foreign country to make the first emphatic acknowledgment of his contribution to literature."

Rothenstein's interest in Indian art dated before he met the Tagores. He had for some time been collecting Indian drawings which he greatly admired. His interest was further stimulated by his contact with Mrs. Herringham, Havell, Binyon and Coomaraswamy, who first showed him "drawings by Abanindranath Tagore and other artists of the Calcutta school, which he greatly admired." But hardly any one else in England was interested in the subject. "I could never understand the lack of interest in Indian art. . . Later, when Havell returned to England, he, Coomaraswamy and I went to hear a lecture by Sir George Birdwood, who while praising her crafts denied fine art to India ; the noble figure of Buddha he likened to a boiled suet pudding ! This so disgusted me that, there and then, I proposed we should found an India Society."

As Mrs. Herringham was leaving for India, Rothenstein also decided to see the land for himself. India Office was not encouraging. He was warned that his sympathy for India and for things Indian would encourage the Nationalists. He was advised to keep in touch with the officials and to this end was provided with letters to Provincial Governors. But despite the warnings and advice of the India Officer, his impressions of India turned out to be different from that of Mr. Beverly Nichols. ( At that time Mr. Amery was not in India Office, nor Lord Linlithgow in Delhi. ) This is what he writes of the Elephanta Caves in Bombay : "The rock-cut entrance to the cave-temple was simple and impressive ; then deep within the shadow we came upon the great Trimurti, a brooding group of three heads of

Brahma, carved with a breadth I had never seen surpassed. Then out of the gloom there emerged figures of Siva, of Siva and Parvati, and of attendant 'apsaras.' I knew that Southern India had crystallised, in the 'Nataraja' in the dance of a single figure, man's profoundest intuition of the universe more simply, more perfectly perhaps, than in any philosophy. This figure, poised between one movement and another symbolises the ordered movements of the planets through the contending forces of gravity and attraction ; but here in Elephanta the powerful figures, menacing, or lost in meditation, suggest the terror and the peace, the destructive and the creative aspects of nature—the agony of birth, the peace of sleep, and of death. How much sculpture loses when detached from its original setting and placed in a museum, I felt here as never before. We were overwhelmed by the dynamic force of these great carvings, and returned to Bombay with a new conception of plastic art."

No less interesting and enthusiastic is his description of Benares and the varied procession of humanity he watched day after day at its ghats. He has recorded his impressions not only in moving and lyrical prose but even more effectively in his beautiful drawing : "Morning at Benaras". In Calcutta he met for the first time the artist brothers—Gaganendranath and Abanindranath. Rabindranath he only saw. "I was attracted, each time I went to Jorasanko, by their uncle, a strikingly handsome figure, dressed in a white 'dhoti' and 'chaddur,' who sat silently listening as we talked. I felt an immediate attraction, and asked whether I might draw him, for I discerned an inner charm as well as great physical beauty, which I tried to set down with my pencil. That this uncle was one of the remarkable men of his time no one gave me a hint."

In 1912 when Rothenstein was back in England he came across a translation of a story by Rabindranath Tagore in the 'Modern Review' (very likely 'The Postmaster'). He was impressed and wanted to read more of him. He wrote about it to Jorasanko and received in return "an exercise book containing translations of poems by Rabindranath made by Ajit Chakravarty, a schoolmaster on the staff at Bolpur. The poems, of a highly mystical character, struck me as being still more remarkable than the story, though but rough translations." Soon after the poet himself visited England. As is well-known, he had been translating some of his poems in English

during his illness prior to his departure from India as well as on board the ship. This manuscript he gave to Rothenstien to read. "That evening," writes Rothenstien, "I read the poems. Here was poetry of a new order which seemed to me on a level with that of the great mystics. Andrew Bradley, to whom I showed them, agreed : It looks as though we have at last a great poet among us again', he wrote, I sent word to Yeats who failed to reply ; but when I wrote again he asked me to send him the poems, and when he had read them his enthusiasm equalled mine. . . The young poets came to sit at Tagore's feet ; Ezra Pound the most assiduously. Among others whom Tagore met were Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, Andrew Bradley, Masefield, J. L. Hammond, Ernest Rhys, Fox-Strangways, Sturge Moore, and Robert Bridges. Tagore, for his part, was struck by the breadth of view and the rapidity of thought that he found among his new friends. 'Those who know the English only in India, do not know Englishmen,' he said."

The story of the publication of 'Gitanjali', its enthusiastic reception in the English Press, followed by the award of the Nobel Prize, is too well known to need repetition. But Rothenstein's testimony regarding the part played by Yeats in the publication of 'Gitanjali' is worth quoting : "I knew that it was said in India that the success of 'Gitanjali' was largely owing to Yeats's re-writing of Tagore's English. That this is false can easily be proved. The original MS. of 'Gitanjali' in English and in Bengali is in my possession. Yeats did here and there suggest slight changes, but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore's hands."

The friendship thus begun in London lasted all their lives. It is interesting to compare the letters the two wrote to each other when the award of the Nobel Prize was announced in November 1913. The letters crossed each other on the seas. On November 15, 1913, Rothenstein wrote : "My very dear friend—I open 'the Times' and a great shout comes from it—Rabindranath has won the Nobel Prize ! I cannot tell you of the delight this splendid homage gives me—the crown is now set upon your brow. Surely this, the greatest honour which can come to a man during his lifetime, must make your own heart swell a little, and then happily, the prize is materially substantial, and you will, at last I think, be rid of all anxiety regarding the school. We have made a holiday of this day—all rejoice in the robe of honour

in which you have been invested before the eyes of Europe. I took the children in a drive, a long promised one ; we had a glorious day, and as it is not often I play truant, the children were like a peal of bells. My dear friend, from the heart I send you my full congratulations. Never I think did ampler reward fit ampler merit ; your pilgrimage is one of the romances of literature. It should awaken the East like a trumpet blast and at last turn the minds of the young men to something more noble and fruitful than political intrigue. For yourself it will be an incentive to a new faith in your own great powers ; you are not of those whose heads can be turned by much praise, and in the solitude of Bolpur you will see still deeper into the mysteries of all those common things amongst which men live so unheeding. Poet of the sun, you will sit in the sun, poet of the night you will go forth into the night, poet of the human heart, you will bring warmth and comfort to a thousand cold and dispirited. Is not this a greater prize than any man can bestow ? To be chosen to serve your fellows and your neighbours now reach across the world. We send our love from house to house. Ever yours—W. R.”

Three days later the Poet was writing :

“The very first moment I received the message of the great honour conferred on me by the award of the Nobel Prize my heart turned towards you with love and gratitude. I felt certain that of all my friends none would be more glad at this news than you. Honour’s crown of honour is to know that it will rejoice the hearts of those whom we hold the most dear. But, all the same, it is a very great trial for me. The perfect whirlwind of public excitement it has given rise to is frightful. It is almost as bad as tying a tin can at a dog’s tail making it impossible for him to move without creating noise and collecting crowds all along. I am being smothered with telegrams and letters for the last few days and the people who never had any friendly feelings towards me nor ever read a line of my works are loudest in their protestations of joy. I cannot tell you how tired I am of all this shouting, the stupendous amount of its unreality being something appalling. Really these people honour the honour in me and not myself.”

They did not meet often, for Rothenstein never repeated his visit to India and Tagore’s visits to England were few and far between. But across the distance the friendship deepened with the

years. Their correspondence, which ended only with the Poet's death, bears ample testimony to it. It is to be hoped that it will be possible one day to publish these letters. It was a healthy friendship, rooted in genuine love and admiration on Rothenstein's part and yet free from all trace of insincere flattery or sentimental adulation. Commenting on Tagore's letter to him, quoted above, Rothenstein writes in his *Memoirs* : "He was not often to escape the tumult and peace was to be his but at rare moments. Henceforward Tagore was to become a world-figure. But great fame is a perilous thing, because it affects not indeed the whole man, but a part of him, and is apt to prove a tyrannous waster of time. Tagore, who had hitherto lived quietly in Bengal, devoting himself to poetry and to his school, would now grow restless. As a man longs for wine or tobacco, so Tagore could not resist the sympathy shown to a great idealist. He wanted to heal the wounds of the world. But a poet, shutting himself away from men to concentrate on his art, most helps his fellows ; to leave his study is to run great risks. No man respected truth, strength of character, single-mindedness and selflessness more than Tagore ; of these qualities he had his full share. But he got involved in contradictions. Too much flattery is as bad for a Commoner as for a King. Firm and frank advice was taken in good part by Tagore, but he could not always resist the sweet syrup offered him by injudicious worshippers."

Tagore would not have been the great artist he was if he had "shut himself away from men to concentrate on his art," as Rothenstein would have wished him to do. Unlike the so-called "pure" artists, he was an artist with a social conscience, and a moral vision. He took his place in the world of men, had his full share of their abuse and of their praise. Rothenstein perhaps did not know that during his long life the Poet had had as much of the bitter draught of the former as of the sweet syrup of the latter. The one did not turn his soul bitter, nor the other turn his head lighter. If he enjoyed the sweet syrup he also carried within him its bitter antidote.

However, whether Rothenstein's fears were justified or not, such honest, well-intentioned criticism is the best tribute a friend and admirer, can pay. Some lovers of Tagore will resent such criticism, for love easily turns into idolatry, and admiration into blind worship. Tagore had no patience with idol worshippers, but they clung to him

all the same, and will continue to cling to his name. Of such disciples Rothenstein wrote : "No man's company gives me more pleasure than Tagore's ; but among his disciples I am uncomfortable ; easy idealism is like Cézannism, or Whistlerism—no, away with the smooth talkers, with those who wear bland spiritual phylacteries upon their foreheads ! These men who specialise, as it were, in idealism, give me the sense of discomfort that I feel among other men who do not practise but preach. I marvel always at Tagore's patience with such, who weaken his artistic integrity by flattery, as they weakened Rodin's."

Such is the fate of great men ! Their tolerance and their humanity help them to endure the folly of their followers who everywhere and in all ages have been blind. Where the idol happens to be a Tagore or a Gandhi, the followers are at least harmless. At most they become bores and make themselves ridiculous. But where the idol is a Churchill, or a Hitler, or a Stalin, or even a Jinnah,—God help the world !

## REVIEWS

### *SELF-RESTRAINT VERSUS SELF INDULGENCE. Part I :*

M. K. Gandhi. Sixth edition, 1944. Navajivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad Price Rs. 1/8/-

THIS is a collection of writings mostly reprinted from *Young India*, bearing on the subject of the above title. They were originally provoked by the controversy over Birth-Control which at one time seemed a question of vital importance. Birth-Control is necessary—in India more than anywhere else, today more than ever. Gandhiji has no doubt of that. "We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of precreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. . . . I have not the shadow of a doubt that married people, if they wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being." But "the only noble and straight method of birth control" is self-control or Brahmacharya. All other and "artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless." Self-restraint is the only valid law of higher life, for individuals as well as for nations. He quotes with approval a French writer's saying : "The future is for the nations who are chaste."

Gandhiji's words, whether they refer to religion, morals or politics—in fact, being an integrated personality, there are no water-tight compartments between the three in his philosophy—, must be listened to with the highest respect and attention. For he lives what he says and never says a thing merely for the sake of saying it. Even when he takes, as he often does, an extremist and uncompromising stand and seems to take for granted that all men are potential Gandhis, he never fails to point out the right direction. Every Indian should therefore read this book and draw benefit from it according to his or her measure of receptivity. Though today we are obsessed—and very naturally—with purely political issues, we might never forget that a sound personal ethic is the only sure foundation of a strong, abiding and wholesome national life.

The Navajivan Publishing House is more than a publishing house. It is a national trust. When this book was more than half way through the press, the Navajivan Press was closed down and sealed by the Government in August 1942. Now that the press has been restored we may look forward to the continuance of this most valuable series of Gandhiji's writings.

K. K.

*JAMINI ROY*: By Bishnu Dey and John Irwin. Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1944. 11, Wellington Square, Calcutta.

*JAMINI ROY* is in vogue. His fame has travelled far beyond the borders of his province. His house, which is also his studio and his gallery, is one of the attractions of modern Calcutta. His pictures adorn the drawing rooms of his numerous admirers, both Indian and foreign. After a long and varied sadhana of many years his genius has won recognition for itself. Those who admired his sincerity, his courage and his talent long before the fashionable intellectuals "discovered" his genius, should be glad of this recognition.

It is but fitting that the Indian Society of Oriental Art should pay a tribute to his genius by publishing a special Number in his honour. Admirers of Jamini Roy will be glad to find in one volume so many reproductions of his paintings and drawings. Whether they will be equally benefited by reading the learned introductions by the two authors is less certain. Reading it, we were reminded of one of Tagore's verses: "Thy words are simple, my master, but not of them that talk of thee." The authors might have taken a lesson in simplicity from the artist whom they so much admire before preparing this erudite discourse on French aesthetics, anthropology, metaphysics of Aryan mythology, psychoanalysis, with a dash of Marxism—so fashionable today. While we respect their unbounded admiration of Jamini Roy's art we do not think they have served his cause well by ignoring or belittling other Indian artists. The only standards they could discover of measuring the genius of this Indian artist are foreign names, of which there is a plethora in the book. This is how the authors open their learned thesis. "By what standards are we to judge Jamini Roy? A genius experimenting in pure form? An Indian Giotto or Cézanne? Let us, at the outset, be

content with the simple claim that Jamini Roy is the only living painter in a country of four hundred million people who has achieved a really pure and vital intensity of creative expression." This is unfortunately a little too reminiscent of Mr. Beverley Nichols's statement that India seemed to him an artistic desert where Jamini Roy was a solitary oasis. It is not necessary to run down a whole people for the sake of praising a single individual, however well-known and worthy of praise. Jamini Roy himself would be the last person to relish such a compliment.

This criticism, for what it is worth, is given in a friendly spirit and is in no way meant to belittle either the credit of the authors whose learning, sincerity and enthusiasm are obvious or the merit of this publication. Lovers of Indian art will welcome this very opportune publication. There are in all sixteen plates, of which seven are in colour, besides several drawings reproduced in the text. We wish Jamini Roy's earlier work had been as adequately represented in the plates as his later work.

K. K.

*SUVARNASAPTATI ŚĀSTRA OR SĀNKHYAKARIKĀ OF ĪSVARA KṚSNA:*

With a commentary reconstructed into Sanskrit from the Chinese translation.

Edited with English notes, etc. by N. Aiyaswami Sastri. Tirumalai-

Tirupati Devasthanams Press, Tirupati. 1944. Price : Rs. 6/-.

WE warmly welcome Prof. N. Aiyaswami Sastri's valuable contribution in this volume to our Sino-Indian literature and studies. We also heartily congratulate Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute, Tirupati on having published the book in their series. The Sankhyakarika with commentary or Suvarna Saptati as it is styled in Chinese was carried to China and translated by Paramartha, a monk of Ujjain in 557-569 A. D.. His translation is well-known for its accuracy and trustworthiness to its original. I may here inform that Paramartha's original, i. e. Indian, name is found in K'ueichi's commentaries as Kulanatha, not Gunanatha as it is current especially amongst the Chinese scholars. The name Paramartha is only an adoption from the Chinese *Chen-ti*. Prof. Sastri has discussed all the relevant points and established in his lengthy and critical introduction that the present Madharavitti cannot be the original of the Chinese. The notes added to each page are both annotative and informative.

It will be highly useful if the Chinese-Sanskrit Indices that are announced in the Preface are also published as the second part of the book. The printing and get-up are commendable. We earnestly hope that Prof. Sastri's endeavour in this line of studies will be much appreciated by all scholars both in India and abroad.

T. Y. S.



*NOT BY POLITICS ALONE* : by Atulananda Chakravarty. Thacker  
Spink & Co. Ltd. Calcutta. Price Rs. 5/-.

IN a time when men are divided against one another and the voice of peace is drowned amidst the clang of arms, Mr. Chakravarti's book can bring some hope and determination in the hearts of those humanists who may have lost faith in the future of mankind. The theme of the book is Internationalism on the basis of a true brotherly feeling, and, particularly, it is Hindu-Muslim unity in India on a cultural plane which alone can be permanent and desirable. Politics cannot solve the communal problem : "A pact is not synonymous with unity. Its character is separative. It brings into focus how much one party can get out of the other. Unity, on the contrary, is born of the desire to contribute to the common objective" ( p. 120 ). The author shows how the Indian History may be rewritten and the fact stressed in it that there has always been an essential unity amongst the Hindus and Muslims in India, the difference, if any, was never felt and it is not real but apparent. "Communal suspicion is a complex which politics does everything to perpetuate and which education must try to solve" ( p. 143. ). The author is not in favour of a Pakistan nor does he want that the majority should rule the minority, he is for a true democracy which is not so much political as spiritual. He appeals to our heart and finds fault with our intellectualism which leads us to seek solutions in politics and economics, in pacts and plans, which are no use when there is lack of love for one another. The author displays a breadth of vision born of detached contemplation, but he has shown not much fondness for clear and consecutive exposition. He is often repetitive, and offers statements,—may be sound in themselves, but disjointed and scarcely supported by facts or reason. For instance, he speaks of monarchy as a better ideal than mass democracy and forecasts that India may be a monarchical state after the wars ; he is in favour of the Indian States and also thinks that England will ultimately prove very useful for India and humanity at large. Then there is some initial confusion in the author's mind ; he sometimes says that unity must come as it is in evolution and in the nature of man, but again, that if we do not unite ourselves we will be wiped out and evolution will have no compunction for us. We can recommend this book to readers who are not very fastidious about logic and history but care for a noble and sincere spirit working in a book. The printing and get-up of the book are ordinary.

P. J. Chaudhury.





